

E G Y P T

AND THE

A R M Y

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BY

LIEUT.-COL. P. G. ELGOOD  
C.M.G.

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First is my soul in its own thought perplexed,  
What is it that is contemplation true? ’

(Dialogue : *Gulshan’l Raz*)

•

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What is it that is contemplation true? ’

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## P R E F A C E

THE writer who seeks to describe a sequence of events still fresh in the public mind sets himself a formidable task. Politicians and administrators who have offered no explanation of their actions are in a position to contradict him on points of fact and to challenge the accuracy of his conclusions. Yet, unless some participant in the triumphs and disasters of the period records his impression of their origin and effect, posterity will be the loser. For memories are short and a company of actors soon passes away.

Modern Egypt points the moral. Over her territory the British Occupation is loosening its grip, and the Anglo-Egyptian Civil Service is slowly disintegrating. Of the early successes of England in Egypt, Milner, in his book under that title, has left an imperishable and truthful record; of the early failures, Wilfred Blunt, in the *Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt*, has bequeathed an equally vivid though bitter account. There remains yet to relate how and why Egypt threw off the yoke.

This is the task I have set out to perform. I am very conscious of my imperfections. I lack experience in the art of writing history, and my share of shaping the fortunes of Egypt under British guidance has been a modest one. I have no other assets than those which

come from a residence in Egypt extending over a generation of years, and from a friendly acquaintance with Egyptians of all ranks and callings. Service in the three ministries of War, Interior, and Finance have permitted me to appreciate the difficulties of Cromer, Gorst, Kitchener and their trusted advisers, and five years of duty with the British Forces to comprehend the embarrassments incidental to a military administration.

‘What is truth?’ said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer. And in the course of writing *Egypt and the Army* I have frequently asked myself that question. Yet if I have not always succeeded in discovering the truth, at least the failure is not due to lack of searching for it or desire to conceal it. Prejudice and inclination I have striven to banish from my mind, and sympathy with errors of judgement has replaced them. Thus of praise and of blame I have been as sparing as circumstances would permit, recognizing that posterity alone is competent to judge.

P. G. ELGOOD.

HELIOPOLIS,  
EGYPT.

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# I

## ATTITUDE OF EGYPT AT THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

THROUGHOUT the anxious days which preceded the actual outbreak of war, Egyptians preserved their habitual composure. They felt no sympathy with any participant in the quarrel, or presentiment that their own country would become involved in it. The disputes and rivalries of Christian Europe have never interested Egypt, and even the knowledge that Great Britain, the Occupying Power, was entangled in the conflict, did not disturb her calmness. Unconscious of their own destiny, Egyptians watched with apathy the approach of catastrophe. The illusion that Egypt was remote from trouble vanished when the Council of Ministers, at the bidding of England, signed a Decree, placing the nation in a state of war. Then, throughout Egypt, excitement displaced the previous indifference, and alarm the former sense of security. Simultaneously, the deep-seated distrust, common to all classes of the population towards the Occupying Power, expanded into a sentiment of bitter, if silent, hatred. Through an involuntary and despised association with Great Britain, Egypt had been dragged into a struggle, of which the origin was obscure to her and the objectives unknown. One, and one consolation only, gave a ray of comfort to the nation. The conflict would be short. Germany, reputed mistress of vast and invincible armies, would quickly humble England to the dust. That conviction supported Egypt throughout the first years of the War.

But no Egyptian contemplated taking any step of his own to hasten that triumph: for dominating his desire to chastise proud England was a still stronger impulse. He was determined to keep out of range of actual hostilities, and, in the confident belief that Egypt was safe from attack, he awaited patiently his deliverance from the British Occupation. There is in him little stomach for legalized warfare. When he thinks of war, he does so as the prerogative of kings, and not of their subjects: the occupation of professional soldiers, not of nations. Thus, anxious as Egypt might be to witness the chastisement of the Occupying Power, her people would not move a finger to help the enemy in the task. The more virile Englishman mistook the sentiment, and upon the back of uncomplaining Egypt he piled heavier burdens, until the exhausted people angrily shook off the load.

The early attitude of the European colony helped to accentuate the impression that the significance of the War had not been grasped in Egypt. War, it was argued gravely, was waged between nations, and not between individuals. In the cosmopolitan communities of Cairo and of Alexandria, many men approved of that contention. Neutrals, among them ardent pro-Germans, seized upon the suggestion as if it were an indisputable truth, while even British and French nationals of long residence in the country were genuinely puzzled how to treat men and women of enemy origin, with whom for so many years they had lived upon terms of intimacy. The Egyptian Government gave little guidance upon this point, their own policy towards German and Austrian subjects in the employ of the State being confused. Some of them were permitted to continue their official duties, while others were required to abstain from office. No definite idea controlled their treatment. The local situation, no doubt, was exceedingly bewildering.

Social and business relations knit into close intimacy foreigners living in Egypt, and some effort of will was required to transform in the twinkling of an eye friendly intercourse into ruthless enmity. War had descended so unexpectedly that Egypt was at a loss sometimes to know how to act. The same uncertainty doubtless prevailed elsewhere in the world, where foreigner mixed freely with foreigner. But the situation was more embarrassing in Egypt, where circumstances from time to time compel all Europeans to unite against a common foe. Under the Capitulations, foreigners possess privileges which Egyptians do not enjoy, and, when these vested rights are threatened, the first will sink their individual differences and combine in the general interest of all. It is hardly surprising in these conditions if, in the eyes of some residents of Egypt, the War in Europe seemed almost fratricidal.

Englishmen engaged in commerce did not wholly share that view: but their patriotism was reinforced by other motives. They had suffered too severely from the acute and often unscrupulous competition of German traders to sympathize with any of the latter now stranded in Egypt, or to regret the misfortune which had befallen them. Beyond that negative attitude they did not proceed, and their silence gave the impression of an honourable but misplaced reluctance to press home the initial advantage, and complete the ruin of German commerce in Egypt. This hesitation, however creditable to their generosity, was less so to their judgement. As private citizens of the Empire, it was their business at this moment to urge the Egyptian Government to ruin every enemy trading concern in the country. The spur was required. The Turkish Commander actually had begun his final concentration of troops to attack the Suez Canal before the last official of German nationality was sent out of Egypt.

There was excuse both for the official and commercial classes. The War had caught Egypt unprepared with any policy or plan of action. Absorbed in their own occupations, few civil servants, and fewer men of business, had found time to reflect seriously upon Imperial matters. Of those, who from inherited habit or from personal inclination had done so, some consistently maintained that Germany was shaping her foreign policy to secure the ultimate destruction of England, while others, a more numerous party, scornfully rejected the possibility of European war in the twentieth century. They were persuaded that financial interests in London and Berlin held monarchs and ministers in a grip from which no escape was possible. This comforting doctrine admirably suited English taste in Egypt, as elsewhere in the Empire, irritated by the dark pessimism of men like Earl Roberts, who strove to remind his countrymen of their defenceless state. Yet in Egypt at least there was some ground for belief that German pretensions were exaggerated by alarmists. Had Germany been preparing plans to attack Great Britain, surely she would have scattered with generous hand the seed of discontent in the dependencies of her enemy. Egypt was an ideal area for such sowing. But there was little trace of propaganda by Germany either above or below the surface in that country, and no premonition of the coming storm marred the tranquil progress of life in Cairo and in Alexandria.

GROWTH OF DISCONTENT WITH THE  
BRITISH OCCUPATION

IT would be a profound mistake to suppose, at the date of the outbreak of the War, that British Control was welcome to the inhabitants of Egypt. Unhappily, precisely the reverse was the case. Few Egyptians esteemed the work of England in their country, fewer still desired it to be continued, and those who had profited most from the Occupation were foremost now in denouncing it. Sudden prosperity had destroyed the reasoning faculty of the nation. Unmindful that their good fortune was due to British rule, they saw in every action of England a purely selfish inspiration. That attitude of suspicion had not always existed. When Englishmen first undertook the reconstruction of Egypt, her inhabitants had accepted their presence willingly enough, as protection against the misrule of Princes and Pashas. But the memory of that period, when no Egyptian might speak his thoughts, or call life and property his own, had faded now from recollection, and a new sense of security encouraged people to profess opinions openly hostile to the British Occupation. England, after a generation of struggle against incompetence and procrastination, had triumphed in her self-imposed task. She had given order and prosperity where insecurity and misery had once reigned. But the victory was incomplete, since the regenerator had lost the confidence and friendship of Egypt. To reach the goal, she had forced upon that backward country a highly complex

administration wherein the people did not understand the rulers, nor the rulers the people. There arose thus among the Egyptians a universal desire to escape from the bondage of a Power which imposed such burdens upon them, and the air was filled with loose talk of national aspirations, wherein Great Britain figured as a tyrant, desirous of crushing the spirit of Egyptians.

But it is hardly possible, within the limits of a single paragraph, to indicate the administrative and political action which transformed slowly into feelings of sullen discontent the mild and not unfriendly former acquiescence of Egyptians in the control of their country by Great Britain. To appreciate the causes of the evolution requires some knowledge of the history of Egypt during the years immediately preceding the War, and, since the troubled relations which have existed between England and Egypt from the winter of 1918-19 in part are inherited from the distrust born of the years of peace, it is desirable that a brief account of the policy of the Occupation be given at this point.

British control had bestowed upon the country, bankrupt within the memory of man, such prosperity and comfort that Englishmen well might be forgiven, did they believe that Egyptians were as well satisfied with the state of affairs as themselves. Many of the British officials engaged in the Egyptian Civil Service during the first decade of this century had no serious doubt upon the point. Yet the failure of the Occupying Power to associate Egyptians with the responsible government of their own country, and, alternately, British reluctance to state a day when the control would be withdrawn fully, was creating suspicion and resentment in the country. Great Britain had declared repeatedly her intention to retire from Egypt when the country was fitted to direct her own

affairs: but what standard Egyptians must attain first had never been indicated, nor how, in existing conditions, they were to acquire the experience necessary to reach it. As the period of the Occupation lengthened, so did the promise of evacuation fade from memory, until numbers of Englishmen connected with Egypt came to regard that country as an integral part of the British Empire. However satisfactory this impression may have been to them and to their fellow Imperialists at home, it was less so to Egyptians. A generation ago the latter were not unmindful of the debt which they owed to Great Britain. They recognized that Lord Cromer had brought order out of chaos, and that the task of his country in Egypt was not yet accomplished. But they wanted also an indication that England remembered her promise: a definite pronouncement that on a certain date Egypt would become politically a free nation. That wish met with no response.

The interior history of the pre-war Occupation may be divided conveniently into three periods. The first was spent in rescuing Egypt from financial ruin; the second witnessed the establishment of British control throughout the administration; and the third was remarkable for the birth and growth of bitter, if secret, hostility towards Great Britain. At the close of the second period, Lord Cromer had accomplished the first half of his labours. His earlier troubles with the Khedive and obstinate Ministers, who frustrated his plans, were at an end. The first had perceived the futility of further opposition, and in place of the second a Council was now in office which submitted to the guidance of the British Agent, and submissively registered the decrees of his making. Some of the worst abuses of the past were gone: others had lost their past severity. The *Corvée*, which dragged unfortunate fellahin to labour, unpaid, upon Public

Works, was abolished : the corruption and nepotism, which formerly had flourished, were lessened : the Sudan had been reconquered : the tax collector demanded no more than the legal dues of the State : and, finally, there was hope that a better understanding on the point of the British occupation of Egypt would be reached with France. On the whole, the benevolent despotism which Lord Cromer had exercised during the first twenty years of the Occupation was amply justified by the material prosperity and security which Egypt now enjoyed.

Similarly, for the purpose of this review Egyptians may be divided into three main groups. The first consists of men who have received an education approximating loosely to a European standard : the professional classes, the Civil Service, and the students of the higher schools. In the second fall the larger landowners, concerned chiefly in the management of their estates : while the fellahin compose the third. The divisions are arbitrary ; but, broadly speaking, they represent to this day the substantial elements of Egyptian society. But the interests of one class frequently were opposed to those of the others, and each group wholly and selfishly intent upon their own ambition to the exclusion of national interests. Thus, the first were aspiring to acquire complete control of the administration of the country, the second to exercise freely every arbitrary privilege which tradition allows in Egypt to wealth and station, and the third to be exempt from all interference either by the State or by more powerful neighbours. So long as this diversity of desire continued, and so long as no grievance, common to all sections of the population, supervened, a united Egypt was improbable. Thus, in the year of the outbreak of war, Egypt was a country divided in aim, and agreed only on the point that her ills sprang from the presence in the land of a meddling foreigner.



For many years the condition of Egypt had given no anxiety to His Majesty's Government. Her rapid evolution from insolvency to prosperity had become a commonplace, and public opinion was accustomed to regard the wise and cautious man responsible for the stupendous transformation as the greatest Colonial Administrator of all ages. No one stopped to reflect that the second, and the more subtly difficult half of the task, lay still before Lord Cromer.

At the beginning of the present century England stood at the parting of the ways. So far she had performed her engagement honourably and meritoriously, and if she intended seriously ever to withdraw control, the hour was at hand when a beginning might be made. Yet so certain did it seem that the initial step would be followed by return to the former administrative and financial muddles, that Great Britain hesitated to take it. She put off, in fact, the hour, and in the indecision of His Majesty's Government Lord Cromer saw and seized his opportunity. He tightened the existing British control. Twenty years' experience of Egyptians had left him with few illusions as to their capacity to direct their own affairs : <sup>1</sup> and he was unwilling to see his life's work thrown away by a premature display of sentimentalism on the part of England. It was not, indeed, as if his task was fully completed : in his judgement it was scarcely yet begun. So with unimpaired vigour he set to work to sweep away abuses of authority which had escaped his notice. There was scope still for his boundless energy. Hitherto he had confined his attention to the unlawful exactions of the State : now he began to inquire into those committed by the individual. It was a congenial duty : for

<sup>1</sup> In his Report upon Egypt, 1903, he writes : ' I have now to deal with another besetting sin of Egyptian officials. I refer to the almost universal tendency to shirk responsibility, to look to the letter rather than to the spirit, of any laws and regulations.'

throughout his Egyptian career Lord Cromer stood first and foremost as the champion of the oppressed. A piteous story of injustice claimed his interest at once, and he would spare no pains to discover and punish the perpetrator. But he had neither the time nor the means to become the arbiter of disputes between the strong and the weak, and gradually the conviction overtook him that the British element of the Civil Service must be strengthened. Already he had placed Englishmen, Advisers in name, Controllers in fact, at the side of Ministers: now he proposed to give the former an adequate staff. If it is true that Lord Cromer never departed publicly from his professed belief that Egypt should be governed by Egyptians guided by Englishmen, it must be confessed at this period that he had very liberal ideas upon the extent of that guidance. In fact, it came about soon that while Egyptians remained nominally in charge of executive duties, their responsibility was vanishing fast. The actual government of the country had passed into the hands of the British Advisers, who ruled through an increased British Inspectorate. But the compromise between principles and practices could not last long, and presently Englishmen in the Ministries in Cairo ruled every Department of State. As the Egyptian head of such a Department died or was pensioned off, his title and pay would be taken by the Englishman, and the latter's place be filled by a newcomer of the same race. This anglicization of the Central Administration took time to complete. There were even moments when the process received direct check. But the interruptions were rare, and their duration brief; in 1914 there were few Egyptians controlling any State business of importance.

Meanwhile, the growing power and number of the British Inspectorate were unpopular with Egyptians. So long as the Inspector confined his attention to

righting injustice, the fellah bore with his intrusion : but when he enforced obedience to laws and regulations which conflicted with primitive Egyptian ideas, the peasant became restive. The Notable, accustomed to exercise almost feudal authority on his own property, resented no less deeply the impertinent curiosity of a stranger into the actions of men of station and wealth. The Mudir, the Mamur,<sup>1</sup> and the police, hitherto, had been his good friends, and it was disturbing to recognize that a fourth party, incorruptible and meddlesome, now must be taken into account. Still more strongly, and more legitimately, did provincial authority feel hurt at the continuous watch kept over their actions. Aware that the final word in the Ministry upon any subject now lay with the British Adviser, who was guided by the reports of the Inspector, Mudirs had to consult the latter upon every point connected with the administration of the Province. There are no people so quick as Egyptians to perceive with whom the real power lies, and the Inspector, often sorely against his will, found himself frequently compelled in honesty to take a point of view different from that held by the Mudir. This might have been, and indeed frequently was, the inevitable outcome of a policy which sought in a country of backward and corrupt tendencies to protect the weak at all costs : but it was, also, the negation of administrative discipline.

It was unfortunate, also, that severe epidemics of cattle plague and cotton worm, which inflicted serious damage on agricultural Egypt in 1903 and the following years, obliged Lord Cromer to sanction in despair the

<sup>1</sup> Egypt for the purposes of Administration is divided into three Governorates (Cairo, Alexandria, and the Suez Canal), and fourteen Provinces, or Mudirias. The latter are subdivided into Districts, or Marakiz. The Mudir is the head of a Province, and the Mamur of a District.

engagement, as temporary Inspectors, of numbers of young Englishmen whose education and previous experience scarcely fitted them for that difficult and delicate duty. Of their determination to merit commendation by the sweat of the brow it is unnecessary to speak: it was in the execution of their duties that they failed, and left a lasting legacy of distrust and dislike of British methods. To the Egyptian, plagues and epidemics are the visitation of the Almighty, and human efforts to thwart His will are both useless and impious. To combat prejudices of this type calls for immense patience and tact, and these young Englishmen did not all possess those qualities of temperament. They were doubly unfortunate, since the provincial Civil Service not only shared the popular views, but appreciated perfectly the difference in authority between a permanent and a temporary official. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that, left to their own devices, the new-comers trampled unwittingly upon the cherished beliefs of agricultural Egypt. Resolved at all costs to perform their duty, they acted as they thought best. The Egyptian, on his side, could not discriminate between Englishmen, or between normal and abnormal conditions. In his wrath he condemned the first, and made no allowance for the second. Investigators, anxiously endeavouring to ascertain the causes which in 1919 transformed peaceful Egypt into a country thirsting for blood, have surmised that one source of the trouble sprang from a decline in the quality of the permanent British official. In point of fact the origin was very different, even if the alleged deterioration was in accordance with fact. But it was not. The average Englishman in the service of the Egyptian Government in that year was of a higher standard, and better trained, than his predecessors. Any impression to the contrary must have been gathered from Egyptians who were thinking of bygone days, when

various young and inexperienced Englishmen were let loose upon the land.

But other factors were at work, contributing to the birth of a new spirit in the Provinces. A mental restlessness pervaded all sections of the community. Landowners spoke bitterly of the changed attitude of the peasant, and the latter reciprocated by murmuring openly against the abuse of authority by the rich. Secure now from the tyranny of the State and the neighbouring Pasha, the fellah awoke to the consciousness that the favour of his custom was being solicited by strangers. Money in those days was cheap and plentiful, and European investors, seeking new fields of investment, turned their eyes again upon Egypt. Agricultural land so fertile as that watered by the Nile affords excellent security for loans. Mushroom agencies, prepared to lend money upon mortgage, sprang up, and touted for borrowers. Offering larger sums at a lower rate of interest than the old village usurer with his limited capital could do, the new-comer ousted the latter from his monopoly. Improvident by nature, the fellahin walked blindly into the net, and borrowed heavily with little thought of the future. In some cases, no doubt, the loans were expended properly: but in too many instances the money was wasted upon absurd extravagances. The fellah would spend cheerfully a sum representing a third of his capital upon a single marriage ceremony, and seek to borrow again in order to meet the legitimate needs of his land. But that process cannot be continued indefinitely, and presently his security was exhausted. Then came the pinch and strain of indebtedness, and unceasing struggles to meet the interest due. The peasant, bewildered and confused, blamed every one but himself for the disaster which had overtaken him. Lord Cromer had watched with keen concern the march of the small cultivator towards insolvency, but

had refrained from indirect intervention. He had as little sympathy with State interference in the natural laws of supply and demand as he had with the belief that trading upon borrowed money is injurious to an agricultural community. In his judgement protection would be afforded most suitably to the fellahin by establishing, under the auspices of the State, a Bank which, lending money at a low rate of interest, could secure indirectly the expenditure of the loan upon the land. For a while the new Bank was successful, and the semi-private concerns, which hitherto had held the field, were unable to meet the competition of their powerful rival. But no long time passed before the necessity of distributing larger dividends obliged the management to consider the interests of shareholders as well as those of clients: and it cannot be said that Lord Cromer's expedient removed the canker.

Nor were Egyptians of influence in provincial circles any better pleased with the new fruits of British control. Especially were they irritated by the airs of independence and of indifference to the old authority which the fellahin displayed, and they made no secret of their belief that the constant interference of the Government in matters of purely domestic concern was the cause of this lamentable state of affairs. They complained bitterly that their own opinion and views were never solicited. There was some truth in this grievance. In the remarkable Constitution bestowed upon Egypt in the first few months of the Occupation, a place was found for local or Provincial Councils, whose members would advise the Central Government upon subjects of local concern. Certainly, individual Notables were anxious enough to be elected to these Councils: but the competition among them arose from a substantial belief that a seat was the shortest way to preferment, rather than from a conviction that members performed any useful service to

the community. As a matter of fact, they were never in a position to do so : for not only were the powers of Councils strictly limited, but unless proposals were initiated by the local British authority, there was small chance of their securing support in Cairo. When people suddenly recognize that they are engaged in bolstering up a pretentious sham, they are apt to feel aggrieved ; and in effect this was precisely the conclusion which members of various Provincial Councils had reached. A movement, begun in the country to demand that these bodies should be invested with wider powers and responsibilities, found sympathetic support from Lord Cromer, who was far from averse to extending the authority of the Councils, provided he could find safeguards which would oblige the members to confine their attention to local business.<sup>1</sup>

If the cost were no more than surrendering the disposal of domestic matters to the control of provincial bodies, the concession, in fact, was well worth making. Lord Cromer had a profound respect for the rights of all landed classes, and his only quarrel with Egyptians had been the arbitrary misuse of their privileges. If such misuse could be prevented in future, and adequate safeguards devised to keep the deliberations of a Council within its proper sphere, it suited him admirably at this period to secure the support of an influential section of the community. For he was planning the formation of an Egyptian Moderate Party, composed of men of fortune and standing, who would co-operate with the British, firstly, in checking the malign influence of the Khedive, and, secondly, in co-operating with him to secure the continuance of

<sup>1</sup> Lord Cromer agreed with Lord Dufferin's views. 'Local self-government', wrote the second, 'is the fittest preparation and most convenient stepping-stone for anything approaching to a constitutional régime.' Report 1906, by British Agent and Consul-General, Egypt.

the prosperity and tranquillity which Egypt now was enjoying. But Lord Cromer delayed so long in his choice of the safeguards which he deemed necessary, that the reform of the Provincial Councils was left to his successor to undertake. Through this hesitation he lost a golden opportunity of attaching to his side an influential section of the community.

However vague and undeveloped in the Provinces was dissatisfaction with the Occupation, the sentiment was more pronounced in the capital. There the appointment of Englishmen, to the exclusion of Egyptians, in the higher posts of the Civil Service, was creating more discontent than His Majesty's Government could have recognized. It is a little surprising that the Egyptian officials themselves accepted the process without public protest. They could hardly have been blamed, or punished, had they urged their claims, as Egyptians, to greater consideration, and their silence fostered the pleasing illusion that an inferior race appreciates profoundly the advantages of honest foreign rule. Yet the Egyptian Civil Service had good reason to feel aggrieved. Not only did the future offer now little prospect of promotion, but the conduct of business under the new conditions was at variance with tradition. Office routine was tightened up, and perhaps favouritism had less say in the matter of advancement of clerks than in the past. But Egyptians whose knowledge of the English language was poor found themselves at a disadvantage, and had to compete now for the better-paid junior posts with the polyglot Syrian. The professional classes sympathized heartily with the misfortune which had befallen their Civil Service. Although they themselves were not actual sufferers, their sons, now still students, would be handicapped by the disability on reaching man's estate: for no boy attends a Government school in Egypt who is not inspired mainly with the ambition



of entering later the Civil Service. The educated Egyptian noted bitterly that Englishmen replacing Egyptians frequently were without the technical knowledge which would have excused their appointment. Men were posted to high commands in the police who had no knowledge of criminal law : others obtained places in the Ministry of Finance without any qualification for their important duties save that of unimpeachable honesty. If Egypt must be overrun by Englishmen, said these critics, at least they deserved officials who were sufficiently masters of their trade to teach it to others. There was some ground for the complaint. British Advisers had to find staff as best they could, and they were not altogether to blame if some of the chosen fell short of that standard required by Egyptians. The narrow margin between the State revenue and expenditure did not permit them to offer rates of pay which would attract highly qualified candidates to the Egyptian Service. Frequently the second-best had to be taken, because Egypt could not afford to pay the market price commanded by the first-rate. This limitation to the field of selection, undoubtedly, was a powerful argument against any wholesale anglicization of the Egyptian Government at that period, and actually did exercise effect upon the process ; but in these circumstances it was unreasonable to censure individual Englishmen for the failure to provide Egypt with officials whose previous career entitled them to become the instructors of others.

Although in the first years of the present century signs, faint but unmistakable, indicated that the rapid transition from misrule to stable government was inspiring Egyptians with visions of a future wherein Great Britain played no part, Lord Cromer did not exhibit concern over the fact. So little, indeed, was he impressed by the indications, and so profoundly convinced

was he of the incapacity of Egyptians to govern themselves, that he was formulating proposals which would kill all dreams of that kind. Put shortly, he was suggesting that an autonomous Egypt was not possible, unless the European residents were associated closely with Egyptians in the government, and Great Britain stood umpire, to settle disputes between the two parties.<sup>1</sup> There was, indeed, but one aspect of the future which gave him food for anxiety: the attitude of Egyptians towards Pan-Islamism, a movement which was attracting the attention of all students of Eastern politics. Cromer described the doctrine as a union of Muslims to defy, and to resist, Christian Powers, and to undertake the regeneration of Islam upon Islamic lines. That comprehensive definition no doubt fitted the teaching, but there exist in Egypt certain factors which suggest that that country would be unprepared to subscribe to such a programme. The educated classes have lost a part of the religious fervour which distinguished their forefathers. It may almost be said that to-day the first are Muslims from tradition rather than from conviction. The ordinances of Mohammed are rarely kept by them. The duty of saying the proper number of prayers at the stated hours, for example, is seldom honoured by Egyptians who have abandoned the national dress in favour of coat and trousers. European costume, in fact, does not lend itself easily to Muslim ritual. It is a simple matter to wash the feet before saying the prayer, if no more is needed than to pull up the skirts of the loose robe and kick off a pair of sandals from the feet; but the operation becomes inconvenient when boots have to be first unlaced and braces loosed. As for the observance of the fast of Ramadan, the month when no food or drink may pass Muslim lips between sunrise and sundown, few Egyptians educated in

<sup>1</sup> See Annual Report, Egypt, 1905.

European standards do more than make the pretence of keeping it. The hurry and bustle of modern life do not encourage practices originally intended for nomad Bedouins; and men living in comfortable circumstances are unlikely to identify themselves with a movement which aims at the stricter maintenance of primitive ritual. Much less do they indulge in dreams of a free and united Muslim brotherhood. Egyptians are too selfishly intent upon their own interests to contemplate risking life and fortune in altruistic adventures: they were not prepared, indeed, at that period to do so on behalf of their own country. Equally it is doubtful if Pan-Islamism is much more attractive to the fellahin. Against the fact that the latter are truly devout followers of Mohammed must be placed their intense suspicion of all new ideas; and, while they may make public profession in and out of season of their adherence to the Faith, they are too individualistic to make a vicarious sacrifice of themselves. Moreover, despite the airs of independence recently assumed by the fellahin, in no country more than in Egypt is greater respect paid to Property. Provided that the influence which ownership legitimately exercises is not abused, every Egyptian, according to his station in life, is prepared to pay, and to receive, the traditional tribute. But in ancient Arabia possession was tribal, and to many members of the million small cultivators of Egypt a doctrine which spoke of brotherhoods had a sinister note.<sup>1</sup>

A survey of the fruits of Pan-Islamism in Egypt in the early years of the present century leaves the impression that the movement captured few adherents.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In 1904 there were 929,000 individual owners of agricultural properties less than 5 feddans in extent. (Feddan = 1.08 acres.)

<sup>2</sup> In the Report upon Egypt, 1906, Lord Cromer discusses Pan-Islamism at some length. He was not convinced that Egypt would be affected by the doctrine.

upon the shoulders of his lieutenant, Mohammed Bey Ferid, a man of creditable reputation in private life and of some fortune. But Ferid was a simple-minded fellow, who became the tool of fanatics from the Azhar, intent upon using the party as a means of reviving the ancient glories of Islam. Among them was Sheikh Shawish Abdel Aziz, once well known at Oxford University as a courteous and capable assistant lecturer in Arabic. To this man the Copt was unclean, the son of abomination. The victim of his vituperation took affright and, repenting of former advances, withdrew from further association with Muslims and the Nationalist programme. Thus came schism in the party, and the destruction of Mustapha Kamel's most valuable work.

Not the least of Mustapha Kamel's achievements was his capture of the sympathy of the students and schoolboys. Young Egypt is singularly susceptible to a teacher who appeals to the emotional side of their character; and upon such an unsophisticated nature the honeyed language of Mustapha Kamel fell with immediate effect. Within a short space of time there was no student who was not an ardent partisan of the new political star, and an enthusiastic canvasser in favour of his tenets. So absorbed did youth become in political argument, that school discipline seriously deteriorated. Parental authority at home followed suit. Fathers, influenced perhaps by the prevailing excitement, could not, or would not, restrain the insubordinate behaviour of their sons. Egyptian parents have lived to regret the indulgence of those days; for the contagion has spread, so that children now pay no respect to the admonition of their elders. Lord Cromer, noting the disastrous effect which politics were producing on education, sought to restore discipline by appointing Saad Pasha Zaghlul, Judge of the Native Courts, to be Minister of Public Instruc-

tion. Zaghlul Pasha, at this period, was a man of moderate opinion, no less a patriot than Mustapha Kamel, but more disposed to gain his end by constitutional methods. For a time the new Minister's avowed intention to purge the colleges and schools of British influence kept the students quiet. Thus Arabic was substituted for English as the medium of instruction, and preparations were made to train Egyptians as teachers in the Higher Schools, later to take the place of Englishmen. But the mischief was too deeply seated for Zaghlul Pasha to eradicate. The students, having learnt their power to trouble lawfully constituted authority, were disinclined to surrender it. They mocked at the Minister when he attempted with a high hand to put down indiscipline, and continued to occupy their attention with political discussion.

The crude criticism and abuse, which Mustapha Kamel and his lieutenants had showered upon Great Britain, received unexpected point from an unfortunate incident which occurred in the village of Dinshawai in the centre of the Delta. For some years there had been complete cessation of the isolated attacks at one time frequently made by Egyptians upon unoffending and unarmed British soldiers of the Army of Occupation, and parties of officers and men, carrying out route-marching and minor manœuvres in the Provinces, had been welcomed by the inhabitants of the district through which the columns passed. In the early summer of 1906, one such column of mounted troops was engaged on these duties, and their programme of work brought the force to the district of Dinshawai. Dinshawai village is famous for the pigeons which the inhabitants breed; and the four or five officers with the column, aware of this fact, asked permission to shoot the birds. There was some misunderstanding, and when the guns arrived at the scene they were met by a crowd of angry villagers.

Neither party understood the language of the other, and in a scrimmage which followed, one officer received injuries from which subsequently he died. Severe retribution followed the death. A Special Tribunal was set up under an old Decree of the Egyptian Government<sup>1</sup> to try the offending fellahin. Of twenty villagers found guilty of taking some part or other in the incident, four were condemned to death and the rest sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment and lashes. The Egyptian public was stupefied by the infliction of such terrible penalties. They were prepared for a punishment which would conform closely to the standard of Mosaic Law, but that four men should die to avenge the life of one seemed to be incredible, and monstrous injustice. That feeling of anger was deepened by the archaic method adopted to carry out the execution of the sentences. The condemned Egyptians were hanged or flogged in public at the scene of the assault. Local British opinion was far from giving unanimous approval of the action of the Tribunal. There were many who doubted whether Egypt at this moment required a lesson of such draconic severity, and they were disposed to believe that nothing would contribute more to the development of latent hostility against the Occupying Power than actions of the type adopted at Dinshawai.

If any observer was in doubt whether such hostility actually existed, the absence of all expression of regret at the departure in 1907 of Lord Cromer from Egypt must have cleared his mind upon the point. Even in the capital few Egyptians came forward to declare their appreciation of the value of the services which this distinguished Englishman had rendered to Egypt. As Lord Cromer, on the morning of his departure, drove through Cairo, the deserted streets bore mournful

<sup>1</sup> Dated February 1895.

testimony to the strength of popular hatred of the British Occupation. Well may he have murmured *Vanitas vanitatum*, as he noted the absence of Egyptians. Yet if his name and work are unhonoured in Egypt, the memory of both will endure so long as history is read in England; and the students of the Victorian era will rank Cromer with the great figures of that illustrious period. Beneath his Liberal professions, Cromer was a convinced Imperialist: a profound believer in the Divine mission of Great Britain to rule backward nations for their own good. Not, in his opinion, was it for such races to claim self-government, nor for politicians at home to dictate the forms of control. Neither were fitted to exercise such privileges or duties.

Sir Eldon Gorst,<sup>1</sup> the new British Agent, had already had wide experience of Egypt, and during a brief period of duty at the Foreign Office<sup>2</sup> he was at leisure to review his early impressions. His intellect was too acute to allow him to nurse the belief of his predecessor, that a virile and prosperous nation, if lightly taxed and given honest administration, will submit uncomplainingly and for ever to exclusion from representative government. This judgement was shared by other Englishmen, both at home and in Egypt. Members of the great Liberal Party were disturbed by Lord Cromer's reactionary policy. The handling of the Dinshawai incident had turned their eyes towards Great Britain's position in Egypt. There was no talk as yet of evacuation: nothing more than the expression of a wish that Egyptians should be admitted to a larger share of the Administration than

<sup>1</sup> Gorst first came to Egypt as a Secretary of the Diplomatic Service, and later accepted temporary service with the Egyptian Government. He had been in succession Adviser to the Ministers of Interior and Finance.

<sup>2</sup> Where he was a Permanent Under-Secretary of State.

they had enjoyed in the past. If Sir Eldon Gorst agreed with these critics, he lent, at least, no encouragement to the arrogant demand of the local Nationalist leaders that autonomy must be conferred upon Egypt at once.<sup>1</sup> In any case, even a moderate instalment of self-government was impracticable at that moment. Neither the Legislative Council nor the General Assembly, the two existing constitutional chambers, possessed the power of initiating legislation, assuming that their members had been capable of exercising such a responsibility. Yet Gorst was fully determined to break away from the policy of Lord Cromer: to give some sign, in fact, to Egyptians that Great Britain had not forgotten her pledge to them. In this perplexity of mind, he fell back upon the Khedive and the Council of Ministers as the sole agencies existing in Egypt which would execute his design. To rule the country through them, and not through Englishmen, was far from being representative government; but it approached that ideal, at least nearer than the personal domination of Lord Cromer had done. The Khedive was well pleased to exchange the stern lectures of the latter for the urbane advice of Gorst, and was flattered to be invited to co-operate with Great Britain in the government of his country. To what extent the British Agency would have been able to persuade His Highness to take a more liberal view of the privileges and duties attached to the Throne remains uncertain. The early death of Sir Eldon Gorst put a stop to the combination. It cannot be said even that the experiment was wholly successful. The Khedive made use of his new powers to exasperate and persecute Egyptians whom he suspected of desiring to transform him into a constitutional ruler; while

<sup>1</sup> See Report upon Egypt, 1907, wherein Sir Eldon Gorst suggests that the majority of the upper and middle classes in Egypt do not wish for any extension of self-government.



the Council of Ministers, freed from the control of Advisers, acted at times in a manner which did not command the approval of Englishmen trained in other traditions.

Perhaps wisely, Sir Eldon Gorst declined to intervene in the domestic differences between Abbas Hilmi and his subjects. His energies were sufficiently occupied with the task of supporting, and piloting through rough water, the new Council of Ministers. The members had been chosen by the Khedive, and no one of them either represented any section of public opinion or displayed desire to admit his fellow countrymen to share the responsibilities of Government. But, short of these defects, the new Council were eager to prove to Great Britain that Egyptians are competent to manage their own administration. Gorst was no less anxious to assist them in the feat; and, in pursuance of that inclination, he replaced certain Advisers by other Englishmen whose views upon the proper attributions of Ministers were more in harmony with his own. Going further, he announced publicly that the process of anglicizing the Administrative Services of Egypt must cease, and that the authority of each Minister in his own sphere henceforth would be supreme.

Englishmen in the service of the Egyptian Government were not altogether unprepared for this declaration: the natural consummation of a new policy with which many cordially sympathized. But they had not thought that the change would imply their own immediate supersession by Egyptians, or that the process would be carried out with little regard to their own feelings; and the transition from control to subordination undoubtedly was made too sharply for the *amour propre* of some of the victims. In principle the Englishmen concerned had no more reason to complain than Egyptians had, when the reverse

proceeding took place. But to give to the British officials, so brusquely set aside, their due, it was not the personal question only which distressed them; but rather the fact that, powerless to interfere, they had now to stand by, watching corruption again creep into the service, and maintaining silence when instances of injustice were brought to their attention. Many of them, for example, regarded with suspicion and dislike a Decree issued by the Council of Ministers shortly after taking office, authorizing, under the pretext of reducing crime, the banishment by administrative courts to a remote penal settlement, of individuals guilty only of the fact that they bore indifferent characters. That Egyptians generally did not share their feeling of dismay at this archaic legislation did not alter the opinion of the Englishmen. They foresaw what must be the ultimate end in Egypt of any system of administrative deportation, even though the fellahin, the class affected, were blind to the threatened danger. Their pessimism was justified in a country where lives are sworn away with as little hesitation as people in more civilized lands excuse themselves from inconvenient dinner engagements; for presently there were complaints that the law had become the machinery for satisfying personal revenge. Even if there had been little truth in that indictment, the deportations had failed to exercise appreciable effect upon the prevalence of crime, and the administrative courts were speedily abolished.

If Sir Eldon Gorst entertained a hope that the change from the policy of Lord Cromer would placate public opinion, he was disappointed. Far from being flattered or impressed by the extended authority now possessed by the Khedive or the Council of Ministers, the representatives of the upper classes clamoured openly for responsible government. The Legislative and the General Assemblies called upon the Council

to prepare at once a law<sup>1</sup> which would confer upon Egypt the right of effective participation in the internal administration of the country. Neither of these bodies accepted the palliatives which had been already offered. The extension of the powers vested in the Provincial Councils, and the replacement of Englishmen by Egyptians, were regarded as unsatisfactory substitutes. So acute became the feeling on the point in the Legislative Council, that its members declined to co-operate further with the Cabinet. But if Sir Eldon Gorst was no man to be intimidated into granting political concessions which he believed to be premature, he was so far in harmony with the aspirations of the Council that he persuaded the Ministers to attend the debates of that body. For Egypt the innovation was a startling experiment; and perhaps it is not surprising if the trial yielded little success. Ministers, unaccustomed to be questioned by persons of less consequence than themselves, took umbrage at the tone adopted by the Council, and the latter retaliated by displaying as much discourtesy as Egyptian etiquette allowed.<sup>2</sup> But there was reason to believe that hostility was directed less against individual Ministers than against the person of the Khedive, whose growing ascendancy was being watched jealously by powerful and independent Notables. The hope once entertained by the latter that they themselves would be strong enough to check His Highness, had been dissipated by the support which the British Agency accorded to him, and the Legislative Council now stood alone between the population and the ruler. Nothing showed more clearly how the Council

<sup>1</sup> See 1908 Report upon Egypt by Sir Eldon Gorst.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Eldon Gorst took the side of the Ministers. In his opinion the latter 'are better acquainted with the real desires and opinions of their countrymen than the members of a Council, who in reality represent nothing but the class of wealthy Beys and Pashas' (Report, 1910).

of Ministers had become the puppets of the Throne than the fact that they allowed the control of the National Wakf properties to pass to the Palace.

If further evidence is required of the determination of the Notables to condemn every scheme, irrespective of its merits, proposed by the Government, it will be found in the attitude of the Legislative Council and the General Assembly towards a proposal made by the Suez Canal Company. Briefly, that corporation proposed that the original concession of 99 years should be prolonged for a further period of 40 years, Egypt profiting by the extension in taking an increasing proportion of the annual profits. To the financial advisers of the Egyptian Government the proposal appeared to be advantageous; and the Council of Ministers, after some hesitation, agreed with that view. Constitutionally, there was no reason to refer to any further authority. But the negotiations had excited much public interest, and a section of the Arabic press was denouncing the Ministers as men who, at the instigation of Great Britain, were prepared to sell the birthright of their country. In these circumstances, Sir Eldon Gorst resolved to transfer the final decision to the General Assembly. Attractive as the financial aspect of the proposal was to British eyes, he was well advised in his decision; for when the votes were counted, one Egyptian only out of the hundred and odd members was bold enough to follow the lead of the Ministers. It cannot be said that the proposal was examined on its merits by the Assembly. Their vote was intended to be a plain indication of Egyptian hostility towards British domination. Worse was to follow. Two days later<sup>1</sup> the Prime Minister was assassinated as he was stepping into his carriage. It was a lamentable tragedy; for the victim, Butros

<sup>1</sup> 20th February 1910.

Pasha Ghali, was an able and upright Egyptian, devoted to the interests of his country.

True to his determination to abstain from interference in the internal administration, Sir Eldon Gorst would intervene in no matter of purely local importance. So steadily did he maintain that resolution, that hysterical European residents professed anxiety lest the policy cloaked an intention upon the part of Great Britain to evacuate Egypt at once. The cry was raised that foreign capital and lives were in danger. The alarm spread, since there is no nervousness comparable with the anxiety of an investor, and was not allayed until the British Agent announced publicly that His Majesty's Government did not propose to withdraw their control. But rumours of this type are difficult to scotch, and hardly a review or magazine at this period was published in the English language which did not contain some article upon the decline of British prestige in Egypt. The climax was reached when Mr. Roosevelt, passing through Cairo, took note of the situation, and later in London gave the British public his impressions of it. They were not flattering. Drawing a picture, more imaginative than exact, of British incapacity in Egypt to appreciate Imperial responsibilities, he is reported to have said, 'Get on or get out'. Criticism of this nature did little good to either party. It wounded the feelings of Englishmen struggling loyally to carry out the spirit of a pledge given by their country, and encouraged Nationalists to believe that Great Britain was wavering. Some part, indeed, of the grievous burden borne uncomplainingly in these days by Sir Eldon Gorst must be laid to the account of his contemporaries in Egypt, who deliberately refused to him the moral support which he required; and the balance to Egyptians too short-sighted to perceive the goal at which he was aiming. But if Gorst did not achieve the results which

he had hoped, at least his failure was not ignoble. He will remain, a solitary figure in the history of the Occupation, the one Englishman who strove to share the government of Egypt with Egyptians.

Lord Kitchener, taking over the reins of office, did not pursue his predecessor's policy. It is doubtful, perhaps, if the new British Agent appreciated immediately that another spirit had overtaken Egyptians, or that their former calm acceptance of the Occupation had been replaced by a different feeling. In the cordial welcome extended to him by all classes of the population, he had every excuse to be blind to the change. The Agency was crowded with callers, anxious to remind the former Sirdar of their existence and past services: for he had that rare quality of remembering humble acquaintances and their work. Much has been written of Lord Kitchener's character and personality; but the interest of authors naturally lies with the part played by their subject in the European War. Of his earlier career less has been said. While still a young man, he attracted the discerning eye of Cromer, who employed him in many fields. He played no games, nor wasted golden moments on social functions. Duty and work were his watchwords throughout life. Yet with all his great qualities of mind and of character, he was the most unaffected of men. Military rank counted nothing to him: he was never too proud to learn from, or to seek advice from a junior. Round any unique personality myths grow up, and that of Kitchener did not escape the common fate. To the public, the Sirdar of the Egyptian Army stood first and foremost as the type of an iron disciplinarian. As a matter of fact he was nothing of the sort. A piercing glance and an austere face suggested, no doubt, that impression; but actually the ordinary standards of military conduct bored him. His sharpest punish-

ment of an offending British officer was to ignore the unfortunate individual in the future. It was only in his attitude towards women that he behaved like the martinet of fiction. He would have none of their sex clinging to the skirts of his army. Not only did he forbid his carefully selected British officers to marry, but they might not become engaged.<sup>1</sup> To that rule he would make no exception.<sup>2</sup> It is doubtful, perhaps, if a British officer can become the conventional disciplinarian unless his mind is wedded to pipeclay and polish. The pomp and circumstance, indeed, of military life had no attractions for Kitchener. He was an indifferent tactician, and possessed no capacity for handling large bodies of troops. None the less, he was a dour and merciless fighter in the field; though his preference there lay in conquering physical, rather than human, obstructions.

But Lord Kitchener had one transcendental quality of mind which lifted him above ordinary men. His incomparable imagination moved in a plane of its own, enabling him to envisage clearly a situation before others had detected its approach. With equal prescience he would plan in advance the methods whereby he proposed to vanquish the difficulties lying across the path he intended to follow. In these

<sup>1</sup> Every British officer on joining had to sign a declaration to that effect.

<sup>2</sup> Occasionally the Sirdar found the existence of this rule inconvenient to himself, and would call upon his native wit to escape from the embarrassment. Thus, when a favourite senior officer became engaged to be married, and honourably reported the fact, Kitchener coolly tore up the communication. The victim wrote again, asking either to be allowed to marry or resign his appointment in the Egyptian Army. But the Sirdar at that moment had no intention of accepting either alternative. He wanted to keep both the officer and the rule. 'But, Sir, you yourself,' said the complainant, when he had an opportunity of stating his case, 'were once engaged.' 'True,' replied the Chief, 'but I got out of it. You follow my example, and let us discuss more important work.'

flights of intellect, caution followed as an escort ; for profound thought, and not inspiration, was the origin of his schemes.

There were noticeable differences between the Kitchener who had left the Sudan for the Transvaal in 1899 and the Kitchener who became His Majesty's Agent and Consul General in Egypt twelve years later. The old simplicity of habit was gone, and replaced by a taste for display which dazzled Cairo, accustomed to the unpretentious household of his predecessor, whose modest hospitality was eclipsed by the brilliant entertainments which the new-comer lavished upon society. The foreign community were among the first in Egypt to react to the change. In place of covert sneers, there was now congratulation that again an Englishman was at the Agency who would rule by the might of his own strong arm. The rejoicing, perhaps, was premature ; but observant persons already had grounds for belief that Lord Kitchener would be less interested in the political aspirations of Egypt than in the material prosperity of the country. No great perspicacity was required to make that diagnosis. He had not been many months in Cairo before he flung himself into vast projects of land reclamation : schemes which involved considerable capital expenditure with little prospect of any return for many years. The finding of the money required, contrary to expectation, became the least of his preoccupations. In the past, he had been notorious for his jealous watch over the disposal of each piastre of the military budget. That parsimony was gone : he thought now in millions of pounds where formerly he had haggled over thousands. The same spirit pushed him to undertake the remodelling of part of Cairo, constructing spacious thoroughfares and noble squares where had existed narrow streets and insanitary slums.



A passion for everything connected with agriculture induced him to investigate the financial condition of the fellahin. Their state had gone from bad to worse, and Lord Kitchener's imagination took one of its usual flights. He evolved from his own consciousness the famous Five Feddan Law, whereby no agricultural holding of less than that area could be mortgaged. The outcry which this legislative action awoke in the local business world would have injured the reputation of any Englishman whose prestige was less well established than that of Lord Kitchener; but the protests ceased when it was recognized that the author of the new law was unmoved by them. The fellah alone continued to grumble. Angered at this arbitrary interference of the Government with the right of every Egyptian to dispose of property as he thought fit, for once he ascribed correctly the cause to British control.

A second reform introduced by Lord Kitchener found more favour in the eyes of the cultivator. From time immemorial the Egyptian producer of raw cotton had been robbed when he came to sell the commodity. He had no means either of verifying the weight of the crop, or of knowing the daily prices of the market. On both points he depended upon what the purchaser chose to say. To place the producer on equal terms, Kitchener established, in the cotton districts, Government offices (*halaqas*), where the seller could obtain trustworthy information. So successful were these *halaqas* that further developments of their work were conceived. Side by side with each, was set up a branch Postal Savings Bank. The idea was admirable. The fellah, having sold his cotton, would surrender at once the cash to the safe keeping of the State. But who will accept a return of 3 per cent. upon his money, when thrice that rate can be obtained by lending it privately; or who,

in a lawless community, is foolish enough to parade his wealth by depositing it in some public institution of which the custodian is a gossip? Certainly not the Egyptian, and the business of the new Savings Banks languished. Presently the word was passed discreetly round provincial authorities, that the advantages of the scheme must be brought home to cultivators. But, in Egypt, advice from exalted personages to their inferiors frequently reaches the latter in the form of an order, and later the strange spectacle was witnessed of improvident fellahin hurriedly borrowing money at 9 per cent. from one quarter, to deposit it in a second which offered no more than a third of that rate.

Although Lord Kitchener kept his own counsel, it was evident from many indications that he would not continue the support which his predecessor had afforded to the Khedive, and the relations between the Palace and the Agency drifted slowly back to the point where Lord Cromer had left them. The fault lay with the Khedive, who seemed to take the same perverse delight in provoking Kitchener as he had in irritating Cromer. Lord Kitchener stood the trial of His Highness's vagaries for some time; but in the winter of 1913-14 his forbearance was coming to an end. The Khedive paid no attention either to admonition or remonstrance. He continued to surround himself with parasites of disreputable antecedents, and to indulge in ill-advised actions.<sup>1</sup> Lord Kitchener was more fortunate in the Council of Ministers. Adepts in the art of sitting astride a fence, they succeeded in satisfying the whims of the Khedive and the instructions of the Agency upon the business of the State. Kitchener had no desire to restrict the personal privileges and authority of Ministers, but

<sup>1</sup> His attempt to sell the Mariut railway, a line of some strategical importance running through Egyptian territory, to a group of foreign capitalists was one instance in point.

he required from them in return a free hand in his own pet projects. If Ministers were willing to assist in their execution, he accepted their help: in the reverse, he fell back upon the British element of the Civil Service, and upon a few individual Egyptians who had caught his eye. It was obvious that this procedure could only end in Englishmen again assuming control of the Central Administration; and within the next few months the work of Sir Eldon Gorst in this respect was largely undone. Once more, therefore, the ambition of educated Egyptians was frustrated, and their hopes of advancement in the service of the Government were doomed.

It was the defect of Lord Kitchener that he rarely took trouble to understand the psychology of the people whom he ruled. Egyptians, to him, were but so many instruments for the fashioning of his plans. He was, in fact, one of the last persons in the world to be beguiled into a belief that the proper study of His Majesty's representative in Egypt was man. In this wise, he passed from the consideration of one reform to that of another, totally indifferent whether the measure in question met a popular want or the contrary. In his own time, he approached the delicate matter of presenting the nation with wider and more liberal constitutional powers than they possessed then. He was impelled to this course, not perhaps so much from the conviction that the hour had arrived when Great Britain might properly share with Egypt the responsibilities of the Government, as from the desire to obtain the goodwill of the richer classes. He was meditating designs upon their wealth. Still reflecting upon grandiose and costly schemes to increase the area and the productiveness of the cultivated land of Egypt, Lord Kitchener required money, and he conceived the idea of establishing Death Duties. But his psychology was at fault. The Egyptian,

fatalist as he may be in life, hates to be reminded of death, and in the end Kitchener reluctantly had to abandon hope of tapping fresh revenue from the accident of death.

Although disappointed on this point, the British Agent did not drop his conception of a reformed Chamber wielding wider authority than the existing Legislative Council and the General Assembly. But if he anticipated that the new Legislative Assembly, born from a union between the two older constitutional bodies, either would placate the prejudices of the Notables, or would satisfy Nationalist aspirations, he was disappointed. The first were uncertain whether their old claim to represent the agricultural districts would not be injured by the lowering of the property qualification required by candidates standing for election ; and the second scoffed at the suggestion that the birth of the new Assembly was a step forward to the goal of representative government. The first Debates showed that the members were unanimous, at least, upon one point : the antagonism which had existed between the older Chambers and the Executive broke out with fresh vigour. In other respects, also, the Assembly was disappointing. The deliberations were distinguished by the same absence of constructive criticism and the same passion for obstructing public business as the Legislative Council had shown. Although the old property qualification possessed by the members of the Legislative Council had been reduced in order to permit ambitious men of the professional classes to seek election, the concession to educated opinion produced disappointing results. The standard of intelligent participation in the Debates of the Assembly seemed little if any higher than that of the old Council ; and the tendency of members to examine business only from the point of view of their own interests, confirmed the belief

of those who maintained that Egypt was not yet ripe for representative government.

In the foregoing paragraphs, enough has been said to suggest, during the years preceding the outbreak of the War, that Great Britain had made little attempt in Egypt to redeem the pledge which she had published to the world. She had neither admitted Egyptians to a responsible share of the government of their country, nor had trained them to take the place later of Englishmen who were controlling the administration. The tendency had been in the contrary direction. With the exception of a few individuals intended for a scholastic career, no educational mission had been sent to Europe. Young Egypt, desirous of entering the civil professions, had had to accept training from Englishmen who lectured in English, and possessed but little practical experience of the subjects which they professed to teach. It is not perhaps surprising in these conditions if Egypt regarded the state of affairs as unsatisfactory, or if that dissatisfaction slowly developed into a sentiment more pronounced, and more bitter. If some of the causes of the changed attitude of the people towards the Occupation sprang from a praiseworthy ambition upon the part of Englishmen to heap prosperity upon the country, it is hard to deny that Great Britain took little or no pains to study the psychological side of the Egyptian situation. Great as were the material benefits which she had conferred upon the inhabitants of the Valley of the Nile, they were obscured by her obstinate reluctance to cede to the governed any share of authority. Egypt, oppressed and tax-ridden, had accepted uncomplainingly a foreign occupation. Freed now from her former miseries, she wanted political freedom; and, by the irony of fate, the chains of subjection were pulled the tauter.

### III

#### FIRST EFFECTS OF WAR

ALTHOUGH subject to the sovereignty of Turkey, an obligation recognized by the payment of an annual tribute, Egypt for a number of years had been independent of the Ottoman Empire. Theoretically, her government still rested upon the personal authority of a Khedive, who appointed and dismissed at his pleasure the Ministers of State, but in practice the power of the ruler was severely restricted by the Occupation, and Englishmen controlled the machinery of the Government. The situation was confessedly illogical; but it had been successful at least in providing Egypt with the blessing of a stable and just Administration. With such smoothness, indeed, did the machinery move, that His Majesty's representative in Cairo and the senior British officials of the Civil Service were accustomed, summer after summer, without anxiety to leave Egypt to the care of their subordinates. During these prolonged periods of vacation, the Government slumbered, and the consideration of fresh business was postponed until the return of the older men in the autumn. Thus, when war broke out with startling abruptness, the controlling brains of the Government were still in Europe, and the first responsibilities fell upon the shoulders of the younger and less experienced Englishmen. They were not unequal to the task.

The Acting British Agent bore the chief burden of these critical days; and to him others turned for guidance. Whatever criticism may be passed upon the

Foreign Office, few will deny its capacity to produce public servants who in moments of national emergency keep head and judgement cool. There is no better example of that fact than the resolute and dignified behaviour of the British Ambassador in Berlin during the last days of peace in Europe ; or, if a second and less impressive instance is required, than the consummate skill with which the Acting British Agent handled the critical situation in Egypt. His environment had been such that he could not command the prestige of his absent chief. Dominating personalities, as those of Cromer or Kitchener, do not work in communion with others. They neither seek nor require assistance in the conception of their plans, and their imaginations travel in orbits of their own. Throughout the Occupation, one masterful man has held the threads of policy in his own hands, leaving to his immediate subordinates little but the transaction of routine business. Under Lord Kitchener this condition of affairs was accentuated. Appointments in the Civil Service of the Egyptian Government, hitherto held by nominees of the Foreign Office, had been given to candidates who, like their chief, were untrained in the traditions of that branch of the Public Service.<sup>1</sup> In consequence, it was a matter of importance to His Majesty's Government that the First Secretary of the Agency should be a man of exceptional promise : not only to permit the Foreign Office through him to maintain direct connexion with Egyptian affairs, but to ensure the presence of a capable public servant in Cairo when the British Agent was absent. Wasteful as that policy seemed in normal circumstances, its wisdom was amply justified on the outbreak of war. If greater responsibilities

<sup>1</sup> A notable instance was the appointment by Lord Kitchener of his former aide-de-camp to be Financial Adviser to the Egyptian Government.

during August and the following months kept Lord Kitchener at home, his place in Egypt was adequately filled.

While Egyptian Ministers had grown accustomed to the subordination of their country to Great Britain, they had not contemplated that that condition one day would involve Egypt in a European war; and if Englishmen in Cairo during the first week of August were beset with anxiety, the Prime Minister and his colleagues in the Cabinet were no less so. Compared with the first, indeed, they were at a greater disadvantage. The others had behind them a Government to advise and, if need arose, to assist; but the Prime Minister could expect from no quarter either support or counsel. The Khedive was in Constantinople; the Legislative Assembly was adjourned; and the country dumb. A strong and obstinate Minister might have bent the situation to his own advantage; but that feat, was beyond the powers of Hussein Rushdi Pasha, President of the Council of Ministers, and distinguished more for tact and resource than strength of character. Such qualities in elemental crises do not carry a leader far, and a supple intellect, however skilled in finesse, will not avail a statesman who is called upon at such moments to face determined and ruthless opponents. Handicapped by the defects of his own character, the Prime Minister was no match for the representative of Great Britain.

Apart from temperamental defects, Rushdi Pasha was embarrassed by the actual factors of the situation. To Great Britain, the dominating point of the Egyptian situation was the safety of the Suez Canal, and she was prepared to make immense sacrifices in order to maintain uninterrupted communication by sea with the East. To Egypt, on the other hand, that anxiety was without significance. She had no ocean shipping, and the Isthmus of Suez lay far from her inhabited



territory. If, then, Europe quarrelled over the neutrality of the Canal, the parties affected might fight out the dispute among themselves. Egypt would refuse to be entangled in the quarrel. But no Egyptian recognized more clearly than Rushdi Pasha, that however much such arguments might appeal to his fellow countrymen, they would command no attention from Great Britain, and no Egyptian appreciated more clearly that the fate of Egypt was bound up with that of England. If the latter held aloof from the struggle, Egypt also would remain outside. In the converse, she would be driven by circumstances beyond her control to follow in the train of Great Britain, or, declining to do so, must defend her action by recourse to arms. Hateful as the British Occupation was to his fellow countrymen, Rushdi could not believe that they would contemplate such an alternative. He was well aware, on the contrary, that the universal sentiment of hostility arose from negative causes, in themselves insufficient to cause a peace-loving people to fight; or, if he were wrong in that view, that no action or protest of Egyptians would influence or alter the plans of the Occupying Power. Of no avail, in his opinion, was it for his nation to ask forbearance from Great Britain at this moment; much less to complain that the situation was unchanged for Egyptians, who had no quarrel with Germany and Austria. Such appeals and protests, he knew, would fall upon deaf ears, and the Prime Minister himself made no public use of them. In his judgement, open defiance of Great Britain could only cause grave suffering to Egypt; and, having convinced himself upon this point, the Prime Minister on the morning of the 5th August 1914 yielded to British pressure, and signed a document which committed Egypt virtually to a declaration of war against the King's enemies.

Satisfactory as were the terms of this announcement to Englishmen, they could hardly have been as welcome to Egyptians. On the latter, the document<sup>1</sup> produced the impression that Egypt had given everything and received nothing. It was as if Great Britain had spun a coin, and cried to Egypt, 'Heads I win, Tails you lose.' Nor did the excuse given in the Preamble<sup>2</sup> of the Decision of the Council of Ministers satisfy these critics. If Egypt did not disarm, or intern the British garrison, the enemy surely would appreciate that her failure to do so sprang from lack of means, not from lack of will; or if Egyptian territory was in danger of attack from the enemy of

<sup>1</sup> The provisions were pretty comprehensive; as, for example, the following: No resident or visitor in Egypt might conclude an agreement with any country at war with His Majesty's Government, or contribute to a loan issued by such a country. Nor might he undertake to insure the property of enemy subjects, or enter into any description of business with them. No vessel flying the Egyptian flag might enter an enemy port, or communicate with such port. British Naval and Military Forces were authorized to exercise in Egyptian ports and territories all the rights of war: and so on. Finally, persons in Egypt were commanded to lend all possible aid to Great Britain.

<sup>2</sup> The phraseology is interesting:

Présidence du Conseil des Ministres. Décision tendant à assurer la Défense de l'Egypte dans la guerre entre l'Allemagne et la Grande-Bretagne.

Considérant que la guerre est malheureusement déclarée entre Sa Majesté le Roi de Grande-Bretagne et des Dépendances Britanniques d'outre-mer, Empereur des Indes, et l'Empereur Allemand:

Considérant que la présence en Egypte de l'Armée d'Occupation de S. M. Britannique rend le pays susceptible d'être attaqué par les ennemis de S. M.:

Considérant qu'à raison de cette situation de fait il est nécessaire que toutes les mesures puissent être prises pour défendre le pays contre le risque d'une telle attaque; qu'à cet effet le gouvernement Egyptien est avisé de prendre les mesures suivantes:

A ces causes, il est porté à la connaissance de tous les intéressés, que dans une réunion du Conseil des Ministres tenue le 5 août 1914 sous la présidence de S. E. le Régent il a été décidé à ce qui suit:

\* \* \* \* \*

(Signé) HUSSEIN RUSHDI.

England, did not the logical defence of the country lie in a profession of neutrality towards all combatants, and not in a closer association with Great Britain? Then, should the worst come to the worst, an invader of Egyptain soil would distinguish between the foreign garrison and the population. But Egyptians whispered these thoughts only among themselves; they made no public protest against the action of the Council of Ministers. The general silence, no doubt, was due partly to the fact that the Declaration committed Egyptians to nothing. Any assistance which they were required under its provisions to give to the Allies was negative in character. That they were forbidden to subscribe to loans issued by the enemy, or to transact commercial business with the latter, excited no resentment. Egyptians do not invest their savings in foreign countries, or trade directly with Europe. Nor do they import or export war material, or deal with coal. Hardly a single prohibition, in fact, mentioned in the Declaration applied to them or affected their individual interests in any way. But if the absence of remonstrance from the public is intelligible, and if it is conceded that the Council of Ministers, in the actual circumstances, had no alternative but to yield to British insistence, Egyptians may be pardoned if they ask why the Prime Minister and his colleagues did not obtain some future advantage for their country in exchange for the liabilities which she undertook. An obstinate refusal from Rushdi Pasha to sign any document of the nature desired, unless Egypt received adequate compensation, would have embarrassed England. Had he and his fellow Ministers, if that demand was refused, tendered their resignations, the prospect of replacing them by others was remote, even if the constitutional difficulty, occasioned by the absence from Egypt of the Khedive, of the appointment of a new Council was overcome

No Egyptian in the circumstances would have dared to accept office. England's choice, then, must have been between two alternatives. Either to have declared hastily some form of annexation, an arbitrary act, certain in the eyes of suspicious neutrals to reflect unfavourably upon the purity of her own motives in entering the War; or to have placated Rushdi Pasha by the immediate offer of a generous measure of autonomy to Egypt. The unreserved surrender of the Council of Ministers on the morning of the 5th August relieved His Majesty's Government of a decision. Yet, in view of later history, both England and Egypt may have well benefited, had the first offered concessions, and the second accepted them.

Amid so many other and more dramatic events, the capitulation of the Egyptian Ministry attracted little notice in London. Satisfied with their triumph, His Majesty's Government for a moment left Egypt alone. There were plenty of domestic problems staring the local Administration in the face, and the Council collaborated loyally with the British in attempting to solve them. The difficulties which confronted the banking institutions of Europe at the first whisper of war, descended also upon Egypt. Individuals there were as anxious as elsewhere to withdraw their credits, and drastic measures were adopted to stop the panic. The note issue of the National Bank was declared to be inconvertible tender.<sup>1</sup> Forty-eight

<sup>1</sup> Decree of Council of Ministers, dated 2nd August 1914 :

Later, when silver became short, notes of smaller denomination than £1 were printed, and the paper issue of the National Bank of Egypt rose from £8,250,000 on the 31st December 1914 to £67,300,000 on the 31st December 1919. At the latter date no other currency was in use in Egypt but notes, gold and silver having disappeared entirely from circulation. The country accepted the transition from metal to paper with calmness. There was, indeed, little reason at first to feel alarm; for each successive issue was duly protected by depositing gold in the Bank of England to half the face value of the paper. But,

hours later, that step was followed by a Moratorium, extending over the following five days: a breathing space which gave the public time to recover sanity, and the Government to concert plans for the future. The Banking Moratorium was successful enough to encourage the Government to declare a general suspension of current commercial operations,<sup>1</sup> and to take certain measures to safeguard the interests of the public in the local cotton market. For some years, this market in Alexandria had controlled its own business through the agency of an elected committee. The latter, hurriedly summoned, had directed that contracts for the purchase of cotton, negotiated before the outbreak of war, would be fixed compulsorily at the price of  $15\frac{3}{8}$  dollars per kantar: an arbitrary and hasty decision, which raised a storm of criticism. The aggrieved parties appealed to the Government. One difficulty in taking any action lay in the fact that the committee had not exceeded their authority. The Government, therefore, adopted the bold course of declaring the decision to be null

as gold became inaccessible, that substantial protection was perforce abandoned, and its place taken by short-dated securities, such as British Treasury Bills, realizable without difficulty into sterling. The par of exchange was at the rate of £E.97,500 to £100, and at that exchange the National Bank distributed in Cairo Egyptian currency notes against sterling paid into its London agency, or conversely, received currency notes under similar conditions. In this manner, parity of exchange was maintained throughout the War. The management of the National Bank has received less credit than they deserve for the bold and skilful handling of the complex banking problems of Egypt in the last days of peace, and their advice to the Council of Ministers, to declare the pre-war note issue to be inconvertible, unquestionably saved the country from confusion, if from no greater calamity. Public opinion at first was sceptical of the policy, and even London hesitated to approve the wisdom of it. But critics had to confess themselves mistaken. Egyptian conditions were not analogous to conditions elsewhere, and the future demonstrated that the National Bank had pursued a course advantageous to Egypt.

<sup>1</sup> Decree of Council of Ministers, dated 9th August 1914.

and void, and to prevent other ill-considered rulings, suspended the Committee's further authority over the market.

Even in grave emergencies, State intervention in financial and commercial operations rarely is welcome to the business community. Too frequently interference provokes rather than allays the prevailing confusion. The reason is not difficult to perceive. The zeal of a Government may easily outstrip its discretion, and officials, being only human, may proceed to legislate beyond their legitimate functions. The intervention of the State is not invited by the commercial world in order that the latter may be instructed how to conduct their operations, but to protect the timid public from the consequence of abnormal and universal panic. Provided that the economic situation of the community is sound, a Government can best assist in national crises by suggesting safeguards which will give people time to recover their common sense, leaving the filling in of details to the wisest and most experienced heads of business groups. It was because the Egyptian Government grasped this elementary principle from the first that the country so successfully and rapidly emerged from the confusion which overtook the commercial markets of the world in the first weeks of August 1914. Errors of judgement and omissions, no doubt, were made during this period. There was some hesitation, for example, in framing rules which would guide the public on the subject of the debts and credits of firms of enemy origin. But administrative omissions of this type were common to the Governments of all Allied countries in the turmoil of the moment, and if Egypt did not escape mistakes, the fact must not obscure the intelligent and bold handling of the situation by the Ministry of Finance.

In intervening in matters of currency and commerce,

the Council of Ministers did not depart from the proper functions of Government. It would have been well if equal discretion had marked its treatment of the food-supply of the nation. There was ample time to review this important subject at leisure. The consumer had no immediate cause for alarm, for there was an abundance of commodities of prime necessity in the country. The cereal crops had just been harvested, and there could be no prospect of stringency of food for many months. But in place of careful and comprehensive consideration of the situation, the Ministers on their own initiative rushed into the publication of a number of decrees. Some of the measures taken were harmless, and some bordered on the ridiculous:<sup>1</sup> but all were the result of too hasty reflection. The first of the type prohibited the export of all articles of prime necessity, whether of local or of foreign production.<sup>2</sup> In so great a hurry were the Ministers to keep in Egypt all stocks of food, that they would not pause to inquire whether the local production was in excess of the consumption

<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to perceive how limiting the number of sheep which the pious are accustomed to sacrifice at the Kurban Bairam, the chief Festival of the Mohammedan year, would make a substantial addition to the future food-supply of Egypt. The interference of the Government in a semi-religious ceremony of antiquity annoyed the wealthy, at whose expense the offering is made, and angered the poor, who enjoyed the meat. But the Ministers did not delay to consider the effect of their intention, and forthwith invited the Grand Sheikh of the University of Islam, and other Dignitaries of the Faith, to meet in solemn conclave, and discuss whether the custom might not be restricted that autumn to the sacrifice by each householder of a single victim. The Conference was too cautious to offer a decided opinion upon such a perplexing point, and referred it to higher authority. Thereupon the Grand Mufti and his learned brother from the Ministry of Justice, after lengthy deliberation, reported that Islamic Law undoubtedly would be satisfied with the suggested restriction, and the Prime Minister published a notice in the official journal calling upon all devout Egyptians to follow this ruling.

<sup>2</sup> Decree dated 2nd August 1914.

requirements of the country, or stop to think how stocks of foreign production, when exhausted, could be replenished. The Tariff Commissions, which were established in various centres<sup>1</sup> to fix each week the prices of food commodities, did more harm than good. Being entirely uncontrolled or co-ordinated, the official tariffs exhibited surprising differences in prices. If the majority of the members came from the consuming classes, rates ruled low: if from the producing, the converse was the case. In practice the result in either case was the same: the retailer, tied by his relations with the local producer or by his inability to replenish imported stocks except at famine prices, traded without regard to tariffs, and the consumer paid rather than go without his needs. It took some weeks before the Council of Ministers grasped the fact that no regulation of prices, or conservation of stocks, would solve the main problem how to increase the supply of food-stuffs in the country. A central Commission, therefore, was established to consider this point, with due consideration for agricultural and commercial interests. Their first action was to rescind some of the more impetuous decisions of the Council. The embargo upon exports of every article of prime necessity, for example, was lifted. But the Commission was handicapped by the narrow circle from which its members were drawn. Neither traders nor agriculturists were represented upon it, although the food-supply of a nation is a sufficiently technical subject to require expert advice. But throughout the War, and long after, the Egyptian Government clung to the erroneous belief that their own officials alone were competent to handle this problem.

The food outlook, indeed, was far from promising. For many years Egypt's production of wheat had fallen below the tonnage which was required for her

<sup>1</sup> Decree dated 20th August 1914.



own consumption:<sup>1</sup> and there were substantial reasons to suggest that the deficiency in the coming year would not be met as in the past by heavy imports of the commodity. The volume of commercial shipping available for carrying wheat to Egypt certainly would be smaller, and some of the former sources of supply, notably Russia, were now closed. Egypt, therefore, had to choose between two alternatives: diminish consumption, or increase existing production. It was possible, no doubt, to secure the first, either by rationing the population, or by persuading it to eat maize in place of wheat: but both suggestions were open to certain objections. Any system of rationing, for example, implies the use of cards, an impracticable procedure in the case of Egyptians, 90 per cent. of whom are illiterate, while a maize diet, sooner or later, produces injurious effects upon consumers whose stomachs are unaccustomed to that type of cereal. The adoption of the second alternative, on the other hand, would entail the reduction of the area hitherto reserved for cotton production, and it was pretty certain that any proposal to interfere with the right of agriculturists to plant as they pleased would excite anger. But the Council of Ministers had some ground for hope that the majority would accept intervention. From lack of buyers a part of the 1914 crop was still unpicked and rotting on the ground, and a second powerful argument in favour of restricting the planting of cotton was the steady and continuous decline in yield of the crop during recent years. While expert agriculturists differed as to the primary cause of the deterioration, all were agreed at least that Egyptian soil was growing exhausted by excess production. But cultivators would not listen to advice. Year after

<sup>1</sup> In 1913, 260,000 tons of foreign wheat were imported by Egypt, or approximately one-third of her requirements.

year, they continued blindly to increase the acreage under cotton,<sup>1</sup> until the biennial planting became the habit and not the exception. So large was the profit from cotton, that few Egyptians stopped to think of the future of the land, and large landowners, infected with the prevailing contagion, imposed no rotation restrictions upon their tenants so long as the latter were willing to pay exaggerated rents. But these arguments in favour of producing more wheat and less cotton, which appeared to the Government to be unanswerable, found in fact less response from the agricultural classes than had been hoped, and, so powerful was the opposition, that the original intention of restricting the production of cotton in the approaching season to one-fourth of the cultivable land was whittled down to one-third. Even this concession did not placate the selfish instincts of the agriculturist.

The failure of the fellahin to sell their most remunerative crop from the absence of buyers had a serious side for the Government, as well as individual growers. The foundation of the State Budget is the Land Tax, and, if its collection falls short of the estimate, the Ministry of Finance is unable to balance receipts with expenditure. In the early autumn there were signs that the fellahin would make default, alleging their inability to meet the tax collector's demand. The State would be faced then by a dilemma. If it accepted as valid the excuse from one individual, it must do so in the case of all, and the equilibrium of the Budget would be wrecked. If, on the other hand, it insisted upon the payment of the dues, and in default distrained the cattle and food crops of the debtor, the

<sup>1</sup> The percentage of cotton to the crop area of perennially irrigated land increased from 25 in 1894 to 44 in 1914. In the next four years the respective percentages were as follows: 28 in 1915 (planting restricted), 40 in 1916, 39 in 1917, and 31 in 1918 (planting restricted).

latter would be ruined. In this plight the Ministry of Finance bethought itself of an ingenious expedient. Any one conversant with Egyptian customs is aware that all fellahin invest part of their savings in the purchase of jewellery for their womenkind. It occurred then to some subtle mind in the Ministry that advantage might be taken of this universal habit, and branch Assay Offices accordingly were opened throughout the country. At them the fellahin were invited to attend and to exchange worked gold for bank-notes. The temptation to a male to pay his obligations by the simple procedure of despoiling the *harim* of their ornaments was insidiously attractive; indeed irresistible when the Ministry of Finance announced its readiness to accept such ornaments to the value of double the sum due on account of the Land Tax. Thus both parties were satisfied. The Treasury got its dues, and the fellah paid vicariously by selling the trinkets of his wife. The only persons who might feel aggrieved were the women. Their most cherished possessions were irretrievably gone; and in many a remote hamlet to this day the other sex still mourn the loss of their gold, and curse the Government which robbed them of it.

Many who had applauded the bold and intelligent treatment of the critical commercial situation during the months of August and September regretted that the Government did not display equal courage in confronting its own difficulties. The financial situation of the State at the close of October certainly was depressing. There was still some doubt whether the Land Tax would be collected in full, and there was additional cause for anxiety in a general decline of receipts from other sources of revenue. In the case of some Departments, such as the State Railways, the decrease was met by raising the existing rates; but that remedy was not applicable to others, such as the

Customs Administration, which is hampered by the existence of Commercial Treaties. Nor was it practicable to open up fresh avenues of taxation. Even if the capitulations had permitted the Government to do so, it was certain that any proposal to impose fresh taxes would excite fierce criticism from Egyptians. Yet the actual situation hardly justified pessimism. If the purchasing power of the country was impaired by an inability to sell raw cotton, there was no reason to believe that that condition would be permanent. Whether the War continued over a long period or not, it was probable that the world before many months had passed would want Egyptian cotton, and pretty certain that some part of the payment would take the form of imported merchandise. The decline in the Customs' receipts, therefore, could be only temporary. Further, Egypt possessed a substantial Reserve Fund. These considerations, no doubt, appealed with greater force to the outside critic than to the officials who were actually responsible that the receipts of the State balanced the expenditure. But while admitting that the circumstances justified the Ministry of Finance in pursuing every reasonable method to ensure the solvency of the State, some of the expedients adopted were questionable. Hurriedly to invite the personnel to relinquish a percentage of their salaries was a policy not distinguished by breadth of vision. A request of that nature is certain to convey to a nervous public a sense of approaching disaster, if it does not suggest the probable bankruptcy of the Treasury. As a matter of fact, the response of the Civil Service to the appeal was poor: not so much from purely selfish motives as from a conviction that there was no reason yet for pessimism. Later it was seen that their view was based upon a sounder appreciation of the future than that of their leaders; for although the accounts of

the financial year were unsatisfactory, they were less so than at one moment had been anticipated, and the revenue was recovering.<sup>1</sup>

After three months of war both the British Agent and the Egyptian Prime Minister, each from his respective point of view, had good reason to be satisfied with the situation. As far as appearances went, Egyptian dissatisfaction with Great Britain was not increased. The population had remained perfectly calm: and the various actions of the Council of Ministers had been received without a word of public protest. Great Britain, in fact, had succeeded in attaining her objective without provoking disturbance. The more dangerous enemy subjects resident in the country had been expelled or were interned. The King's Forces lay astride of the Suez Canal, and were in control of the three seaports of Egypt. In these Imperial or War measures the Prime Minister had not interfered, and his sympathetic attitude had made a favourable impression among Englishmen. In return he and the Council were permitted to exercise much wider authority than they had done in the past. So much was this the case, that of this period it may be fairly said that the control of the domestic business of Egypt had slid almost entirely into the hands of the Prime Minister and his colleagues. It was but fair that Rushdi Pasha should receive from the British nation some recognition, however indirect, of the loyal manner wherein he had observed the provisions of the Decision of the 5th August. A less scrupulous Prime Minister could have twisted the situation to his own advantage and to the injury

<sup>1</sup> Not only had receipts from all State-earning services fallen off, but the Egyptian Government was called upon to finance or to guarantee various emergency measures. Heavy calls upon the Reserve Fund, standing then at £5,000,000, were made. In the end, on the 31st March 1915, there was a Budget deficiency of £1,460,000.

of the Occupying Power. Egypt offers at any time and in any circumstances a rich field for intrigue: and at this particular juncture it would not have been difficult for Rushdi, had he wished to do so, to transform the dislike felt by his countrymen against the Occupation into disaffection. But he stooped to no such trickery. He had given his bond, and as an honest man he proposed to keep it.

Yet the moment was approaching when Egyptians would have an opportunity of calling upon the Prime Minister to render an account of his stewardship. According to its statutes the Legislative Assembly recommenced sitting in November, and Ministers inevitably would be subjected to a string of questions relating to the War legislation of the preceding months. They would be within their strict rights, no doubt, to decline to reply. But in every constitutional body there are ways and means whereby pertinacious hecklers can override procedure, and from harassed Ministers extract the desired information. The Egyptian Legislative Assembly, during its brief life, had demonstrated the truth of that observation again and again: and Rushdi Pasha had no wish now to find himself cross-examined. His anxiety to be spared the ordeal met with the support of Great Britain, and the meeting of the Legislative Assembly was adjourned for a further two months.<sup>1</sup> During that period martial law was declared and freedom of debate in such conditions obviously was inconsistent with its authority. Further postponements, therefore, took place: and in fact the Assembly never met again.

It was not unlikely that the members of the Assembly would refuse to submit tamely to this act of interference with their legitimate rights, and that their dissatisfaction would be echoed in the country.

<sup>1</sup> 18th October 1914.

There was nothing indeed in the statutes of the constitution which forbade members of the Assembly from meeting in private, electing a chairman, and discussing matters of national interest: and it was probable that some such action would be taken sooner or later by various groups. In other countries, and in similar circumstances, a Prime Minister at this juncture would have appealed to the patriotism of his fellow countrymen, urging them to spare the executive the embarrassment of unhelpful obstruction and criticism. But apart from the fact that the surrender by the Council of Ministers of national interests in favour of Great Britain was secretly disavowed by Egyptians, any appeal of that type would fail to command the sympathy of the Assembly for another reason. Nothing that the Prime Minister could say or do at this point would remove the suspicion and jealousy with which the members of the Chamber regarded his arbitrary seizure of all executive powers. It was necessary, therefore, in his own self-defence that Rushdi Pasha should improvise legislation to give the executive the right to proclaim as unlawful any meeting of the public. A law<sup>1</sup> thereupon was hurriedly drafted, which declared the assembly of five or more persons, unless previously authorized, to be a penal offence. But the fact that the Minister of Justice thought it desirable to publish simultaneously a lengthy Note, which sought to demonstrate that the new law followed the spirit of the Penal Code, suggested some uncertainty whether Egyptians would accept peacefully this limitation of their liberty. But no protest was made, and its absence freed responsible Englishmen from any anxiety of the reception which Egypt would accord to measures imposed under martial law. If Egyptians could be convinced by such specious reasoning as that

<sup>1</sup> 20th October 1914.

suggested in the Note of the Minister of Justice, they would swallow any pill if it were gilded lightly.

While the Egyptian Government was engaged in these tasks Lt.-General Sir John Maxwell had succeeded Major-General the Hon. J. Byng in the military command of Egypt. The latter was pre-eminently a fighting soldier, whose genius did not lie in administration. No surprise was expressed, therefore, when he was transferred to a more important theatre of military operations. General Maxwell was a fine example of the resolute, yet cautious, soldier administrator. A better choice for the Egyptian command at that juncture could hardly have been made. He knew Egypt thoroughly, and in the course of his previous service in that country he had made many friends among its inhabitants. The new-comer's position from the first was no sinecure. Difficulties piled up around him. Attack was threatening from without and disaffection brewing within. Yet he never lost heart or patience. His inexhaustible energy caused him in course of time to accept burdens which more properly belonged to the Civil Government, and there were detractors who declared that Maxwell assumed an authority over Egypt beyond his legitimate military functions. But such critics lost sight of the fact that once a country is placed under martial law the final arbiter in nearly all matters must be the commander of the military garrison, and Maxwell was too conscientious a soldier to shrink from, or to surrender to the Civil Power, his own responsibility.

One of his earliest duties was the disposal of enemy subjects, who, from age, infirmity, or long residence in Egypt, hitherto had remained unmolested. It is characteristic of General Maxwell's thoroughness that he made a personal investigation of the history of each individual before deciding his fate. Essentially a broad-minded man, he refused to act harshly towards



the victims of war: enemy subjects often only in name. His considerate attitude in this direction did not command the approval of some of his fellow countrymen. Their customary good sense was clouded by a spirit of fierce hatred towards all enemies of the King's Government, irrespective of age or sex. Yet it is possible that Maxwell's outlook was the saner. The families whom he spared from the horror of internment in a prisoners of war camp could hardly injure Great Britain's position in Egypt, even supposing they had the wish to do so: and his liberal ideas tended to create the impression that England knew how to temper justice with mercy. It is a pity that a similar belief did not inspire the Civil Government when they examined the case of Egyptians reported to be disaffected towards the Allied Cause. The conditions certainly were very different. The military authorities had to inquire into the antecedents of a few individuals only: whereas the Egyptian Executive was faced with an overwhelming task. To some officials the entire population was suspect. It was excusable, therefore, if mistakes were made, and if Egyptians, whose offence was no greater than some whispered indiscretion, were arrested. It is, in fact, far from easy in a country placed in a state of war to distinguish between men who have no sympathy with the policy of their rulers and those who are willing to conspire with the enemy: the border-line between the two groups is so faintly traced. The matter was not one in which the military authorities at first claimed a share. For one thing they had no power to act. Martial law was not yet declared, and the arrest of civilian inhabitants was solely a subject of consideration for the Egyptian Government, which had undertaken certain engagements towards the Allies under the Decision of the Council of Ministers of the 5th August.

Obviously there was little prospect of persuading the Council to order the arrest of Egyptians upon the score that their freedom was a source of danger to Imperial interest. No more could be fairly expected from Ministers than that they would close their eyes to irregularities committed by Englishmen in their service. It is to the credit of the latter that they did not flinch from the responsibility, nor reckon the consequences to themselves, if things went awry. The situation plainly demanded as a preliminary measure of precaution the removal of some notoriously disaffected Egyptians: but whether circumstances justified the number who were detained in custody, is more questionable. That hesitation is accentuated by the fact that, in Cairo, Englishmen employed as their chief agent a Syrian of indifferent character. There is even some reason to believe that some of his recommendations were made to suit his own purposes. He would be entitled to the benefit of doubt on this point had his later career been above suspicion. But it was not. In the course of the War he was brought to trial upon charges of corruption and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. It would have been better had Englishmen reposed less confidence in their trusted subordinates, and it cannot be said that the former are altogether guiltless of the condemnation which Egyptians showered upon their heads. In war, errors of judgement there must be; but of the number which were made here some would have been avoided had more leisurely inquiry been made, and others, if a truer appreciation had been formed of the capacity of the suspected individual to injure the Allied cause. The misfortune is that Egyptians remembered the mistakes.

- But there was one section of the community which in no circumstances could be left at liberty. The chosen associates of the Khedive and the officers of the house-

hold, if permitted to remain in Egypt, would become inevitably the centre of all disaffected elements of the population. While a few of the officers were never better pleased than when their master was absent, there were in the Palace others upon whose personal attachment the Khedive, absent in Constantinople, could rely implicitly. Through their agency he would be in a position to maintain his influence in Egypt. There was nothing else then to do but to deport all. With the officers went the hangers-on of the Court ; disreputable creatures for the most part, whose virulent hatred of Great Britain had been their chief merit in the Khedive's eyes. Some sympathy was felt among Englishmen for one or two aides-de-camp of His Highness, who shared less deservedly the fate of their comrades. But General Maxwell was inexorable, and would admit of no exception to his order.

On the outbreak of war all Englishmen in the service of the Egyptian Government, who were on leave of absence in Europe, had returned to Egypt, and some spent the subsequent weeks in offering to perform any humble service in connexion with the War. Many were not so burdened with official duties that they were unable to undertake additional work. As the hour of luncheon approaches the Government close their offices, and even during the brief hours of work in the mornings not every British official could find sufficient occupation to keep him busy. Those who were anxious to find some type of war work applied in every likely quarter, the Egyptian War Office, the Police, the Coastguards, and so on. But success rarely rewarded their quest : each service seemed to be over-staffed with Englishmen. Disappointed, some seekers gave up the chase ; others, more determined in spirit or more conscious of their patriotism, fretted at inaction, and boldly asked permission to join His Majesty's forces in England. Such individuals needed

not the spur which the Prime Minister at the Guildhall on the 4th September 1914 addressed to the nation in his 'Call to Arms'. But the British official had not anticipated that his request to the Egyptian Government would be curtly refused; still less did he expect to be told, if he insisted upon joining the Army, that he would be considered to have resigned his appointment in the Civil Service. Every applicant, young or old, untrained or trained in arms, received no other reply. Not all were prepared to accept it as final. Many were genuinely puzzled to understand how they had become so suddenly indispensable to the Civil Service; others were furious that Englishmen should be punished for a simple act of patriotism. They asked no more from the Egyptian Government than that their appointments should be kept open if the holders returned to Egypt.<sup>1</sup> So impetuous were some that they accepted the decision of the Government and resigned their appointments. The majority hesitated to pursue so undignified and improper a course. It was not for subordinates to say whether their duty was to fight or to remain at their civilian posts; the decision lay more properly with the departmental chief of every volunteer. Elementary discipline clearly demanded from all agreement with that principle. Older men set to work, therefore, to urge the Egyptian Government to consider who of their British officials were truly indispensable to the conduct of business, and who were not. Very soon it was evident that the senior Englishmen of the Service were not in accord upon this point. While some maintained that no one of their staff could be spared, others were insistent that Egypt must make her sacrifice like other employees of labour. Similar

<sup>1</sup> In his 'Call to Arms' speech at the Guildhall, Mr. Asquith ended as follows: 'The appeal which we make is addressed quite as much to their employers as to the men themselves. The latter ought to be assured of reinstatement in their positions at the end of the War.'

conflicts no doubt were taking place in the Civil Services of all combatant nations, and not every Head of a State Department was patriotic, or far-sighted enough, to submit to the loss of staff at a moment when the labours of the State were largely increased. Eventually in Egypt a sensible compromise was reached. Under it, officials of Allied nationalities, who joined the fighting forces with the consent of superior authority, were granted unpaid leave for the duration of the War. Thus they reserved their right to pension, and to take up at the close of hostilities their civilian appointments. The concession was generously interpreted,<sup>1</sup> though here and there was a senior who placed the interests of the Civil Service of Egypt above those of the British Empire. It was difficult to convince such a person that the appeals of Great Britain to her manhood would be made in vain if all employers of labour thought as he did. But his attitude was intelligible if not very generous. He was responsible for the machinery of the State, and no human agency could foretell what might happen

<sup>1</sup> The British Officials who left Egypt to join the new armies were too few in number, and too junior in position, to affect the efficiency of the administering machine ; but undoubtedly it was a piece of good fortune for the Army in Egypt that the Egyptian Government were loath to part with their most useful Englishmen, for the Expeditionary Force on the Canal, and later in Palestine, drew heavily upon the various Ministries to officer a number of non-combatant units, Intelligence, Labour Corps, Engineering services behind the line, and so on, wherein knowledge of local conditions is of greater value than experience of troops. The Egyptian Government met the Army very handsomely. Thus the Ministry of Public Works, at one period or another, lent the services of 107 British and Allied officials ; that of Finance 68 ; of Interior 66 ; of Education 51 ; and of Agriculture 21. None the less, in October 1916 it was elicited that there were still working in the offices of the Government 451 Englishmen of military age, all of whom, save 16, were declared to be indispensable to the conduct of the administration. A Commission studying Man Power in Egypt during the following summer thought the figure of 451 to be unduly high.

to Egypt in the course of the next few months. Thus he would inform some of the applicants that their lack of military experience rendered them useless as volunteers, and others that they were too advanced in years to employ it. At the bottom of his heart lurked perhaps the belief that youth desired to escape the monotony of office routine. In a few that impulse may have been the most powerful incentive to join the ranks, but not in the majority who went from Egypt. Their resolution to fight was influenced by no desire to enjoy new sensations or to win distinctions. They had no ambition to gratify, nor personal end to gain. With many, indeed, the exact opposite was the case. In exchanging the Egyptian Civil Service for the British Army, they would sacrifice a considerable part of their existing income, and in surrendering the amenities of Cairo for the discomforts of the field would drive an equally poor bargain. Nor were they simple enough to believe that pleasant staff appointments would fall to their lot, or that instruction in drill and musketry would be an interesting occupation. The call of their country alone drove them into the new armies.

Early in October the General Officer commanding the British Forces in Egypt, bethinking of his own needs, would allow no more Englishmen of military age, or of military experience, to leave the country, and from that order it was reasonable to infer, since Egypt was tranquil, that relations between the Allies and the Ottoman Empire were passing through a critical stage. Very little was known locally about the situation in Constantinople. The rigorous censorship imposed upon the Press systematically excised from its pages all items of news relating to the trend of events in Turkey, and as strictly forbade public discussion or conjecture upon them. Allied subjects in Egypt were a little better off, since

from the London and Paris newspapers, which were delivered uncensored, they acquired belatedly information denied to Egyptians. None the less it is legitimate to say of the early autumn of 1914 that throughout Egypt there was no consciousness of the significance of the reported concentration in Syria of formidable Turkish Forces, or no doubt that the Sinai desert was an impossible barrier to a hostile army advancing upon the Suez Canal. Local opinion was sadly uninstructed. Not only did people complacently ignore factors directly affecting the security of Egypt, but they knew nothing of the potential resources of the Ottoman Empire, or of the arrogant ambitions of its rulers. A little more education upon the first point would have saved the foolish optimism thought and talked, when General Sir Ian Hamilton set out to force a landing on the beach of Gallipoli, and wider knowledge on the second that the Suez Canal was protected by nature from attack.

One did not need to possess much military knowledge to recognize that General Maxwell had insufficient forces to hold Egypt if Turkey joined the enemy ; or if that contingency arose that the army of the Occupation would be called upon to undertake a more extended rôle than in August had been contemplated. Of regular staff he had hardly any. The War Office, following the policy which it had pursued elsewhere, had recalled the majority of officers serving at Headquarters. It was highly improbable that the vacancies would be filled by fresh officers from home. There was difficulty enough in supplying qualified men for the Expeditionary Corps in France, and certainly there were none to spare for commands still outside areas of hostilities. Other General Officers in a similar predicament might have wrung their hands in dismay. Not so Maxwell. If he could not have the best he would take the next. The pre-war garrison of regular

troops, in accordance with plan, had sailed for home in the first month of the War, and their place in Egypt had been taken by a division of Territorial troops. The latter were still untrained, and Divisional Head-quarters could spare no battalion officers to fill temporarily staff appointments. General Maxwell therefore was obliged to fall back upon civilian resources. Fortunately the material existed, scattered about in various branches of the Civil Service; ex-regular officers, who, having served a term of years in the Egyptian Army, had been selected for employment in the Egyptian Civil Service. It is true that these individuals were past the prime of life, and inexperienced in modern war. On the other hand, they possessed the advantage of acquaintance with the country and its inhabitants. But the scent of war was in the air. The Anglo-Egyptian garrisons holding the Peninsula of Sinai were being withdrawn, the territory was abandoned to the enemy, and the Suez Canal placed in a state of defence. Meantime the little band of retired officers departed to the Canal to await there the arrival of two divisions from India.

Although overshadowed always as a military base, first by Alexandria and later by Qantara, the port of Port Said in the last years of the War played a part confusing and novel. It became the central link of the chain of commercial communication extending from the Far East to the United Kingdom; the pivot, as it were, upon which success and failure revolved. Then the port was so crowded with shipping that vessels were moored fifteen to twenty miles up the Canal; then available quay accommodation became so filled with merchandise that acres of fresh and distant ground were covered with goods; and then the town hardly could contain its swollen population. Over these intricate commercial opera-



tions hung the distracting knowledge that they were conducted in a zone of armies and subject to the difficulties which that condition begets. Port Said from the water's edge grew unrecognizable ; only the town preserved its unromantic and dilapidated appearance. The impressive proportions of the statue of de Lesseps, which dominates the entrance of the harbour, seem to lose nobility from their proximity to the line of gaunt buildings which run parallel with the channel ; ugly architecture emphasized by the huge placards fixed to the topmost stories proclaiming the virtue of somebody's whisky or tea. Screened from view of the harbour lies Arab Town, a collection of tumbledown tenements, wherein the Egyptian section of the population of the town live and die. In 1914 the port still bore its ancient and unsavoury reputation for wickedness. Some part of the fame was undeserved ; for in the more frequented streets the grosser forms of obscenity were no longer to be seen. But even in the European quarter vice was rampant, and a large and sinful underworld flourished happily.

If the opinion in Cairo was insensible of impending danger from Turkey, the Canal Zone was equally unconscious. If it was suggested that Egypt might become in the future an actual theatre of war, the remark would be received with an incredulous smile. ' But looking at the subject from a shipping point of view,' a pessimist would ask an acquaintance, ' Have you no anxiety as to the safety of the Suez Canal if Turkey enters the War ? ' ' Not from the land. No regular Army could traverse Sinai,' was the unvariable reply. Strange that men should know so little of the events of history. Many captains of war had found no difficulty in accomplishing the passage of the Peninsula. Apart from warriors of antiquity, the Pharaohs and Assyrian princes, there had been

a number of leaders in historical times who had embarked lightly upon the enterprise, from Turkish adventurers like Selim, and Crusaders like Baldwin and Louis XI, down to the greatest soldier of all ages, Napoleon I. Small wonder if, in these circumstances, the northern, or sea-coast route from Port Said or Qantara to El Arish is known to Arabs as the Darab El Sultani, or the Royal Road.<sup>1</sup> There existed in fact, if opinion in Egypt could but perceive the implication, no military reason why history in the year 1914 should not repeat itself, or why Turkish forces should not deliver an attack upon the Suez Canal.

But General Maxwell had not sent liaison officers to the Suez Canal in order to discuss lessons of history, or the consequences which would follow the alliance of Turkey with the Central Powers. More serious business engaged their attention. A cursory glance round Port Said was sufficient to show, if serious use was to be made of this port as a military base, that its value would depend largely upon the goodwill of the shipping agencies, from the fact that all harbour plant was their property. Neither the Navy nor the Army had any, and the Suez Canal Company, maintaining an attitude of strict neutrality towards all the belligerents, had shown a proper reluctance to be publicly associated yet with any military preparations undertaken to defend the waterway. In cultivating, therefore, relations with the shipping community, liaison officers felt pretty sure that any courtesy would be repaid a hundredfold, if ever the hour came when the military authorities required their co-operation. The pity was that the Army never succeeded in acquiring the respect of the first, or appreciated their

<sup>1</sup> Although authorities are not unanimous on the point, modern thought inclines to the belief that the Israelites when escaping from Egypt pursued this road.

point of view. Military methods of transacting business were too slapdash and too hurried to suit commercial people, and men who have reached knowledge through laborious and prolonged apprenticeship do not welcome the co-operation of amateurs. In such conditions suspicion of the other's motives is soon excited, and distrust engendered.

## IV

### THE SUEZ CANAL

TURKEY was in a position to strike at the Allies in two directions : by blocking the Dardanelles, and by attacking the Suez Canal. Her successful accomplishment of the first operation was responsible for prolonging the War for years. Had she been equally fortunate in the second, a heavy blow would have been dealt to Allied communications. In the succeeding pages reference frequently will be made to the Suez Canal, and since knowledge of this maritime waterway is confined usually to the fact that de Lesseps was its creator, and that Great Britain now is the largest individual shareholder of the operating company, it is possible that a brief account of the early history of the Canal will not be uninteresting to the general reader. The enterprise is an extraordinary story : an epic which portrays on the one hand unflinching resolution in the face of physical and financial difficulty, and on the other obstinate blindness to the capacity of human energy and to the needs of posterity. Not the least astonishing point in the history of Ferdinand de Lesseps is that he began the execution of the project at a period of life when his contemporaries were cultivating cabbages and roses. Having spent his best years in diplomacy, he had abandoned that career in a fit of pique, and was living in retirement when circumstances allowed his cherished dream of connecting the Mediterranean and Red Seas by a canal to assume practical shape. The conception of cutting through the Isthmus of Suez had long been present in his mind. Tradition, indeed, reports that

he thought first of the project when quarantined in Alexandria Harbour many years before. There was nothing original in the idea. That universal genius Napoleon I had dallied with it, and Denon had written of it. In more ancient times undoubtedly the two seas had been joined by a passage. Herodotus and Strabo both speak of the fact, and the Romans made considerable use of the channel. So, too, did Amru many centuries later. But their canal or canals did not pierce the Isthmus of Suez: probably all took off from the Eastern or Pelusiatic branch of the Nile, traversed the land of Goshen to the west of Ismailia, and, skirting the line of the present maritime canal, descended to Suez.

It was believed, in fact, that the level of the Mediterranean was so much higher than that of the Red Sea that the construction of a junction canal across the Isthmus itself was physically impossible. De Lesseps, from one reason and another, was stoutly convinced that no such difference of level existed, and an International Commission, composed of prominent engineers, after exhaustive study confirmed that opinion. But, in keeping with his impetuosity he would not wait for that judgement. He had succeeded already in persuading the Viceroy of Egypt to sign a concession,<sup>1</sup> granting to him the sole right to construct the Canal. Said Pasha, then Viceroy, was truly a splendid patron. He could refuse nothing to his friend, whom he addressed in official documents as *mon dévoué ami de haute naissance et de sang élevé*. The suitor, in turn, did not hesitate to take advantage of the ruler's princely generosity. Thus de Lesseps acquired, without incurring obligation in return, the freehold possession of huge and valuable tracts of land, which would become fertile when watered by the subsidiary canal to be dug in order to conduct

<sup>1</sup> 30th November 1854.

the Nile to the Isthmus. Rarely indeed has the truth of the French saying, *L'appétit vient en mangeant*, been illustrated better than in the history of the early relations between Viceroy and concessionaire. Within the next few months a second and more gratifying Firman was signed. Among its conditions was one which cost Egypt dearly in the end: an engagement whereby the Viceroy agreed to supply four-fifths of the manual labour required to excavate the maritime canal.

Said Pasha, however, was vassal of Turkey, and on occasion found it convenient to remember the fact. A little alarmed by de Lesseps' incessant energy, he conceived the idea of covering himself from further responsibility, by stipulating formally at the foot of the Firmans that actual work upon the excavation must be postponed until the Sublime Porte had signified his approval of the undertaking. Ignorant of the political situation at Constantinople, de Lesseps hurried there, only to meet, to his chagrin and surprise, a check. It came from an unexpected quarter. Lord Stratford, British Ambassador to Turkey, that renowned diplomatist, looked with disfavour upon both the man and the scheme. De Lesseps, undeterred, posted to London. He found in that capital no greater sympathy than he had secured at Constantinople: Lord Palmerston supported the views of his representative in Turkey. In truth, the aim of Great Britain at that era was to strengthen, rather than relax, the tie which bound the destiny of Egypt to Turkey, and the construction of a maritime canal across the Isthmus did not accord with the spirit of that policy. Some of the objections raised by Great Britain are curious reading to-day. It was urged<sup>1</sup> that no maritime canal could be dug

<sup>1</sup> A dispatch written to Lord Clarendon in June 1855 to the British Ambassador in Paris.

in shifting sand, or alternatively that the cost of excavation would be so enormous that the waterway commercially could be of no value. From this reasoning the Foreign Office deduced that politics, and not business, were at the bottom of the scheme ; a desire, in fact, upon the part of France to threaten the security of British communication with India. Whatever evidence there was to support that particular suspicion, it is clear from the general attitude of the British Government of those years that no project under French auspices in Egypt would be received with favour. A Barrage, or Dam, across the Nile a few miles north of Cairo, designed by French engineers, recently had been completed. It was contended quite seriously that the object of the Barrage was less to store water for irrigation purposes than in case of necessity to flood the land in the vicinity of Cairo, in order to provide military protection to that town. Politicians fortify their opinions with strange theories.

De Lesseps, though sadly disappointed with his failure to interest England in the project, did not abandon hope. The same expert Commission which had pronounced judgement upon the levels of the two seas, had declared also that the construction of a canal across the Isthmus was perfectly practicable at reasonable cost : and, armed with that authoritative opinion, de Lesseps began the work of excavation. Within three years<sup>1</sup> water communication between the Mediterranean and Lake Timsah was established. With half the work thus completed de Lesseps had some right to believe that his chief difficulties were surmounted. He deceived himself : the worst were yet to come. The Sublime Porte, biding his time, as yet had taken no notice of de Lesseps' infringement of the condition attached to the Firmans of the

<sup>1</sup> 1862.

Viceroy, and Great Britain, swallowing her suspicion of political design, had ceased to protest. But each Power kept a jealous watch over the progress of the work, awaiting a turn of events which would justify their interference. Egypt herself supplied the excuse. Ismail Pasha, objecting in the name of his people to their further employment as forced labourers, cancelled the privilege granted by his predecessor to de Lesseps. Great Britain, in the cause of humanity, applauded the decision.

Upon de Lesseps the blow fell heavily. All his financial calculations had been based upon a regular and adequate supply of free Egyptian labour, and its withdrawal put a stop temporarily to further operations. Without suggesting that either Great Britain or Egypt was guilty of bad faith in objecting to de Lesseps' use of forced fellahin labour, it must be confessed that both had an ulterior motive in view. Ismail Pasha was laudably interested in the development of Egyptian agriculture, and very properly declared that Egyptian labour would be employed more remuneratively on the land than in constructing a maritime canal commercially useless to his country. Great Britain, also, pressed by the spinning industry, ardently sought for those increased supplies of cotton which in more favourable circumstances Egypt would produce. In vain de Lesseps declared that no protest had been raised to the recent construction of the Alexandria and Cairo railroad by forced labour: in vain he urged that the promise made by Said Pasha should not be lightly broken. His complaint was unheeded, and Egyptian labour was withdrawn. It is true that Egypt paid later a heavy fine for her default to supply fellahin labour; but large as that sum was, it did not compensate de Lesseps for the unexpected loss which he sustained. Nor was this the only buffet which Fate dealt him. Some months



before, in the midst of struggles to raise funds, he had been called upon to surrender the ownership<sup>1</sup> granted to him by Saïd Pasha of the agricultural lands which would be irrigated by the freshwater canal. The way of the pioneer is never easy, and de Lesseps might have been forgiven if at this point he had given up the struggle. But he was made of other metal. *Illi robur et aes triplex circa pectus erat*. Subordinates might sicken of their task; but de Lesseps never.

The Suez Canal<sup>2</sup> was opened to maritime traffic on the 17th November 1869. It had then a depth of only 24 feet, and, at the narrowest portions, a width of but 66. These dimensions contrast poorly with those of to-day, when vessels of large tonnage pass and repass one another in the waterway with no apparent risk or delay. In general, it may be said that the bed follows a physical depression, the deepest portions being the basins of the three natural pools, Timsah and the two Bitter Lakes. Cutting across the centre and the southern extremities of the depression rise two or three ridges of higher ground, forming definite prominences which traverse the line of the Canal. Thus between El Ferdan and Ismailia is the plateau of El Gizr, some ten miles in length, and 50 to 60 feet above sea-level. This plateau, broadly speaking, separates the flat, and in places marshy, area of the northern section of the Canal from the more broken ground which extends from Lake Timsah to Suez. Between Timsah and the Bitter Lakes rises a second plateau stretching from Tussum to Serapeum: and at Shallufa, the southern extremity of the Little Bitter Lake, yet a third area of high ground is met. Through the plateaux the Canal is carried in deep

<sup>1</sup> Cancelled by a fresh agreement dated 18th March 1863. Following an arbitration by Napoleon III, Egypt paid the Canal Company a fine of 20 million francs, and later a further sum of 38 million francs.

<sup>2</sup> See Plate I.

cuttings of the narrowest possible breadth, in order to economize the cost and labour of excavation. To an enemy, therefore, attempting in the face of opposition to force the passage of the channel, any one of these three localities offers the best chances of success. Conversely, they would be the points the most jealously watched by the defenders.

The general aspect of the country adjoining the Canal is desolate and melancholy. East and west the eye rests upon nothing but waste sand. At scattered points the monotony of the banks is relieved by groups of humble buildings, the habitations of employees of the Company, who signal the progress of the passing ships, or by some glimpse of the far-distant hills of Sinai, suggestive of scenery more arresting than the dead level of the land adjacent to the banks of the Canal. But apart from these fleeting interests the waterway offers nothing which can excite or capture the attention of a visitor. There is no human or animal movement, and no sign of life save at Ismailia, Port Said, or Suez. At Ismailia are the headquarters of the Company, and from this central position the Agent Superieur and his staff control the work of the various sections of the Canal. But the business of Ismailia is administrative and not executive. Vessels do not coal, or load and discharge merchandise ; no quays or piers exist, and no harbour plant. Port Said, in fact, has become to shipping what de Lesseps originally hoped Ismailia would be, the hive of the Canal. At that port are the docks and the fleet of tugs, the coal yards and main offices of the steamship agencies, and the head-quarters of most of the employees of the Canal Company.

Of the distance between Port Said and Suez, approximately two-thirds are canal and the remainder lakes. Throughout the length a single track of railroad runs on the west bank, more or less parallel

to the water, and connecting at Ismailia with the main line to Cairo. Closely following the track, flows the narrow freshwater canal, which takes off at Ismailia from the Nile Canal, watering the land from which de Lesseps anticipated so much profit. Thus, even if the maritime passage is blocked, communication and water-supply are uninterrupted to a defending army occupying positions on the west bank. The Suez Canal itself in 1914 was a formidable obstacle to the passage of an enemy, striving to enter Egypt proper, since it had a depth of 34 feet and a minimum width of 190, increasing in certain stretches to as much as 300 feet. From the northern extremity to Qantara the channel is excavated along the bed of Lake Manzala, a large and shallow expanse of salt water, confined now to the west of the Canal. The banks of the latter throughout this section are low, and the ground to the east is dead flat, exposing the railtrack in this section to the hostile fire of an enemy advancing from the east. As the Canal proceeds south towards Ismailia, the summits of either bank rise well above the surface of the water, and the railway is concealed. In this, the second section, is the first deep cutting at El Gizr, where the command lies generally with the eastern side. From the most northerly point of Lake Timsah to the Bitter Lakes the banks again are lofty, and the east commands the west except at Tussum. The fourth and last section extends from Shallufa to Suez. Here there is little difference in the height of the two banks: though both overtop the channel from 25 to 30 feet.

There are, or were in 1914, no roads in the zone; and communication other than by the use of the railway on the western bank was fatiguing and difficult. There were even localities, such as that lying between Lake Timsah and the permanent way, which from the swampy nature of the soil were practically impossible

to troops. In other places the soft and yielding nature of the land makes the progress of men on foot almost equally as difficult as over the boggy ground. At such points, rapidly to bring up reinforcements to the defence was no easy task. An active enemy, crossing the Canal by surprise, would have a fair chance of dislodging the defenders from their position on the west bank, and of digging themselves in, before a sufficiently strong force was concentrated to eject the invader.

Each successive Firman granted by the Viceroy of Egypt had affirmed solemnly the neutrality of the maritime canal. For many years France had struggled patiently to induce the Great Powers to accept that principle, and had initiated endless negotiations to that effect. But nearly a generation elapsed before Europe was persuaded to sink individual jealousies in a common cause,<sup>1</sup> and almost as long a period before Great Britain joined other countries in guaranteeing to the Canal immunity from attack and blockade. If any Treaty or Convention could have assured such security, this document did so comprehensively enough. Passage through the Canal was to be free at all times to all shipping without distinction of flag; belligerents were not to disembark troops or to station them in the zone; and so on. Various were the precautions taken under the Convention to assure observance of the neutrality of the Canal: such as the institution of a Commission composed of the diplomatic representatives in Egypt of the signatories of the Convention, who became responsible that no infringement of the provisions of the Convention passed unnoticed. But when the world is disturbed by some great con-

<sup>1</sup> Convention dated 29th October 1888. Great Britain declined to sign while her military occupation of Egypt existed. On the conclusion of the Anglo-French Convention of 1904 she withdrew her objection, and affixed her signature to the agreement.

vulsion, anxiety naturally is felt lest some one signatory to international agreement should find it convenient to forget his obligation. This was the case in August 1914 with the Convention of the Suez Canal. Great Britain had ground for belief that Germany, if circumstances required the execution of that design, would plan the immediate interruption of British communication with India through the Canal. It was well known that in recent years a steady campaign had been pursued to persuade the German public that England's weakness lay in that quarter: and, in face of Prussian cynicism towards the sacredness of Treaties, Great Britain, if war was declared, could afford to take no risks as regards the freedom of navigation to her shipping through the Isthmus of Suez. This security of passage was a matter of life and death to the Empire: and if British troops in August 1914 occupied strategic points in the zone, the technical infringement of the Convention of 1888 is excusable. Neither the troops nor the ships of war stationed at Port Said and Suez were there to forbid the right of passage: their purpose rather was to assure to every nation, irrespective of flag, the right to make use of the waterway. Thus by force of circumstances Great Britain, with the consent and approval of France, became the protector of an undertaking of which in the past she had been the most bitter critic: a striking example of the unexpected turns which Fortune gives her wheel.

As a successful business corporation the Suez Canal Company may justly challenge comparison with any organization in the world. Its sagacious and prudent management, the solidarity of the personnel, and the pride which all connected with the Company feel in their efficiency, bear out that statement. It is the duty of this powerful society to produce dividends, and the Board of Directors set about the task in

a businesslike way. Exploring every source to increase revenue, they pay the staff partly by fixed salary and partly by bonus. In this manner the co-operation of employees with the Directors is secured, both classes being equally interested in obtaining the maximum revenue with the minimum expenditure. So high does the reputation of the Company stand, that a first appointment to its permanent cadres is regarded in France to-day much in the same light as a writership of the East India Company was held in England a hundred years ago: the lucky recipient thinks himself to be made for life. And well he may do so: for if no fortune can be acquired in service on the Isthmus of Suez, at least there is good pay, an assured future, and easy work. During the years of the military occupation of the Suez Canal, rarely a day passed that British commanders were not in communication with the Company. They had, thus, ample occasion to form their own judgement upon its methods of business, and a more single-minded associate in a common cause they hardly could hope to meet. Its wealth of plant and efficiency of personnel filled naval and military officers with constant wonder and admiration: and fortunate it was for the defenders of the Canal that the Company had so great resources at command. It was a poor return for the open-handed manner in which these resources were placed later at the disposal of the British military authorities, that frequently the latter would borrow plant and omit to acknowledge receipt, despite a promise that a formal letter would be sent. Instances occurred again and again in the early days of the military occupation of the Canal, when senior officers hurriedly would descend upon Port Said, borrow craft from the Company, and forget later to perform their own part of the contract. Such omissions were the more reprehensible since the Canal Company

made no charge but actual out of pocket expenses for the use of plant. So frequent were these cases that in the spring of 1916 the Company declined to allow any further loan of craft or stores from Port Said, unless the military authority of that area signed the demand.

Throughout the War the attitude of the Canal Company towards the military was distinguished by great generosity. For the use of quays, warehouses, and so on, not a penny of rent ever was asked. It is true that from August 1914 to December 1916 the troops were engaged directly in protecting the property of the lender, and, since no suggestion was made that the latter should contribute towards the heavy expenditure incurred on the defence, the Company might be well expected to place its resources at the British Commander's disposal without charge. But from 1917 onwards a new situation arose. The Expeditionary Force was well into Palestine, and the Suez Canal relieved from danger of further attack. If the Company had pressed from that date for payment from the military, it is difficult to perceive how such a claim could be resisted. But no such demand ever was preferred. Many months after the Armistice, indeed, the Army was continuing to occupy extended storage areas, to the injury of the Company's revenue; and doubtless would be there to this day had not the Company finally, and in self-defence, fixed a definite date when the troops either must evacuate the ground or pay for the use of it.

## V

### MARTIAL LAW

IN the comfortable years which preceded the outbreak of the European War, martial law had a sinister sound. In the mind of the public its declaration connoted an unfortunate state of affairs where murder, pillage, and sudden death would be matters of daily occurrence. Mankind was physically unable to picture military rule as a measure imposed by way of precaution, and intended at the worst to supplement, not to displace, the ordinary law of the land: much less did nations dream that a day would come when the inconveniences arising from the domination of soldiers would be borne with cheerful resignation in order to further the success of their armies in the field. If, then, the mind of Europe had travelled so far from its habitual grooves of thought that it could accept such conceptions as martial law as the commonplace of life, it is not surprising that the spectacle of one Government imposing the condition upon a second and weaker, which already had given proof of its friendliness, excited comment. Even neutrals were not surprised when on the 2nd November 1914 Great Britain declared martial law over Egypt. To the few Egyptians who were sincerely loyal to Great Britain, the declaration seemed unnecessary and impolitic. The critical stage in British and Egyptian relations had been passed successfully on the 5th August, when Egypt declared herself to be in a state of war. Since that announcement the country had remained tranquil, and there was no indication that the calm would be disturbed in the immediate future. All signs, in fact, pointed



the other way. The Civil Administration was proceeding normally, public security was maintained, and Egypt had raised no formal objection to accepting the responsibilities which association with the cause of the Allies imposed upon her. In short, Great Britain had gained her end. To frighten Egyptians by some ill-advised and untimely war measure into a different attitude of mind courted the risk of producing open disaffection. Thus did the small minority of well-wishers towards Great Britain argue.

But His Majesty's Government perceived on the horizon various factors which presently would produce a radical change of relations between the Occupying Power and Egypt. Not only was Turkey about to declare war upon Great Britain, but her military advisers had avowed their intention to strike at the latter Power through Egypt. It was pretty certain that some of the inhabitants of the Nile valley would sympathize, even if they abstained from active co-operation, with the Turks. A common religion and the traditional affinity between the two nations afforded reasonable grounds for holding this view, and Great Britain was well advised to take precautions in Egypt ahead of time. A second and more immediate menace to her position in the country came from the presence of the Khedive in Constantinople. A declared enemy of England, Abbas Hilmi, so long as he remained *de iure* ruler of Egypt, would be a potential danger, and linked with the necessity of removing him from the throne and selecting a successor was the difficulty of determining the future political status of the country. Diplomacy would have to devise means to end the anomalous situation of Egyptians still technically the subjects of the Ottoman Empire, and in consequence, once war was declared, the enemies of a Power who was actually defending their territory. But whatever step was taken in this direction, and

whoever chosen to ascend the throne, England could not hope by her action to please Egyptian opinion. Not improbably demonstrations of displeasure would be made, and it was uncertain if executive officials of the Egyptian Government could be trusted to suppress disturbance. If British troops had to come to the aid of the civil power, ordinary prudence suggested that the machinery authorizing their intervention should be ready in good time. Again, if the Turks held fast to their plan of attacking Egypt, a line of defence in Egyptian territory must be held. Material of all description would have to be found locally, and military necessities could not be handicapped by the reluctance of Egyptian or of neutral owners to lend or sell their property to Great Britain. Lastly, it was certain that the Army of Occupation would be increased largely, and protection in consequence required by the untrained troops against the peculiar temptations, moral and physical, of Egypt. In fact, from the British point of view, the reasons for declaring martial law in November 1914 were overwhelming.

The proclamation was couched in brief terms. It consisted only of four printed lines notifying the Egyptian public that General Maxwell had been directed by his Government to assume military control of Egypt to assure its protection, and in consequence of these instructions that the country was placed under martial law. Having stated his authority, the General Officer Commanding, in a second proclamation of the same date,<sup>1</sup> proceeded to explain his interpretation of the powers conferred upon him. He desired Egypt to understand that martial law was not intended to supersede but to supplement the Civil Administration. Further, that property required by military exigencies and requisitioned would be paid

<sup>1</sup> 2nd November 1914.

for at equitable rates of compensation.<sup>1</sup> As a final reassurance to the population that martial law was a measure of precaution only, General Maxwell declared that no civilian would be subject to interference provided he conformed to all orders given by the competent military authority. Five days later came the formal but no longer unexpected notice that a state of war was existing between Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire. In announcing the fact, Maxwell seized the opportunity of defining the causes which had led to the rupture of peace. He instanced the military preparations in Syria which could be directed only against Egypt, the actual violation of Egyptian territory by the incursion of Turkish armed forces into Sinai, and the unprovoked attack by the Ottoman Navy under German direction upon the territory of Russia, the ally of His Britannic Majesty. Great Britain, he declared, was now fighting firstly to protect the rights and liberties of Egypt won upon the battlefield by Mehemet Ali, and secondly to secure the continuance of the peaceful prosperity which during thirty years Egypt had enjoyed from the British Occupation. Had the proclamation stopped at this point it would have been an admirable explanation of the causes which compelled Great Britain in the interests of Egypt, no less than in her own, to take up the challenge of the Ottoman Empire. Unfortunately some perverse influence induced His Majesty's Government to declare solemnly that Great Britain accepted the sole burden of the War, without calling upon the Egyptian people for aid. Such an undertaking should never have been given. No human intelligence in November 1914 could foretell the development of

<sup>1</sup> Later an Arbitration Commission, presided over by a chairman of undeniable impartiality, was set up to decide cases wherein the parties concerned could reach no agreement. The awards of this Commission were never questioned by the losers.

the War, or whether Egyptian assistance would not become necessary to the success of military operations.

It is doubtful if this generous, but imprudent, offer of Great Britain succeeded in attaching to her side a single fresh adherent among Egyptians. Men of that race are not impressed by a *beau geste*, and long since had lost faith in British promises. Even the Prime Minister, in acknowledging receipt of a copy of General Maxwell's proclamation, made no comment upon the assurance given that the Egyptian people would not be called upon to take part in the hostilities, although the British Diplomatic Agency in a covering letter had emphasized the point.<sup>1</sup> Rushdi Pasha was too cautious to be betrayed into any expression of approval or of thanks<sup>2</sup> until he saw whether effect would be given to the promise. His discretion was sound. The undertaking was broken almost at once. Within a few days of the publication of the proclamation, artillery of the Egyptian Army were on their way to the Suez Canal to take part in the defence. Other infringements, less legitimate, followed in course of time. Among them may be cited the recall<sup>3</sup> of the Army Reserve to the colours, and the forced enrolment of fellahin in the ranks of the Auxiliary Egyptian Corps.<sup>4</sup> There are apologists who assert that no more was intended in the proclamation than a general assurance that Egyptians would not be conscripted actually to fight. It is true, with the exception of the Army units which took part in the defence of the Canal during 1914-15, that Egyptians were called upon to serve only in Auxiliary Corps: but from the point of view of bodily security, frequently in the Palestine campaign there was not much to choose

<sup>1</sup> Letter from British Agency: dated 7th November 1914.

<sup>2</sup> Reply from the Prime Minister: dated 7th November 1914.

<sup>3</sup> 20th January 1916.

<sup>4</sup> During the winter of 1917-18.

between service with those units and with British troops in the front line. Both were bombed and shelled impartially by the enemy. The truth is that the promise was made without thought of the future. But mistakes and errors of judgement frequently are repairable when their responsible authority possesses sufficient courage to admit them. In this instance it would have been more honourable to confess later that the undertaking given to Egypt under the proclamation could not be carried out, and a frank admission to that effect might have saved Egypt to the Empire.

From the fact that His Majesty's Government did not define the future relations between the two countries until the 18th December, that is to say, six weeks after Turkey had joined the enemy, it may be surmised that some difference of opinion existed on the subject. There were, in fact, two almost irreconcilable elements in the problem. On the one hand, in the interests of the War, Great Britain had to strengthen her grip upon Egypt; and, on the other, to establish new relations with Egyptians which would operate satisfactorily when peace was restored. Thus the situation was composed of factors which were both of a temporary and of a permanent nature. There were four courses open to the British Cabinet. First, to annex Egypt, when the country would be treated as a Crown Colony; secondly, to incorporate her as a self-governing Dominion within the Empire; thirdly, to grant complete independence wherein, under Treaty, Egypt would become an Ally; and lastly, to continue the forms of the existing control, save that Great Britain replaced Turkey in the titular overlordship. If there had been no factor present other than the strict prosecution of the War the first was the simplest solution of the problem. But the word annexation had an ugly sound. Its declaration over

Egypt would excite increased distrust, though perhaps in a lesser degree than on the 5th August, among neutral nations of British policy, and would be certain to arouse fierce anger among all classes of Egyptians. To alienate the sympathies of the first, or to disturb the existing tranquillity of the second, would be foolish: and influenced by these considerations His Majesty's Government rejected annexation. The adoption of either of the two following alternatives would be a signal proof, at least, that England had no ignoble or interested motive in taking up arms. But December 1914 was no moment to undertake hazardous political experiments, nor was the Egyptian nation in the circumstances a suitable subject for their trial. No Treaty, however strictly worded, could guarantee that Egypt would be faithful to her obligations: rather was it probable that her population would use the new political freedom to proclaim their loyalty to Constantinople. To grant independence or autonomy to a people who not only were unfitted in the opinion of the guardian to undertake responsible government, but were out of sympathy with that guardian's situation, would be attended with grave risk. Great Britain, fighting for her existence and looking upon Egypt as the keystone of one arch of her defence, could not accept the risk. There remained thus only the fourth alternative. Its adoption in many respects was a misfortune. To perpetuate deliberately a state of affairs universally condemned by enlightened Egyptians as responsible for the embittered feeling of their nation towards the Occupying Power, was neither prudent nor statesmanlike: the more so since that sentiment inevitably must be accentuated by Great Britain's seizure of the overlordship. Yet despite its manifest disadvantages the choice of this form at least permitted His Majesty's Government to strengthen their hold over Egypt, and provide

Egyptians with an impeccable nationality. Time and the presence on the throne of a new ruler, more willing than his predecessor to co-operate with Great Britain, must be trusted to mitigate the bitterness of spirit. A Protectorate was declared.

Meanwhile public opinion was still calm. The attitude of the nation towards the War and towards Great Britain was unchanged, but no leader had arisen yet to voice the discontent of all classes. Considerations also were in play which compelled discreet silence upon the part of men of influence. Many were disturbed by the economic position of the country. There was a good deal of unemployment, and skilled and casual labour alike were suffering. Others were nervous of identifying themselves with any party opposed to the Government. They could no longer ventilate their grievances in the Press, as the Censorship forbade the publication of articles which commented adversely upon the action either of military or civil authority. There was also the new Penal Law introduced by the Council of Ministers on the 18th October forbidding the assembly of five or more persons. It was even dangerous for an Egyptian now to discuss political subjects among his intimates. A hurriedly written letter brought to the notice of the authorities might condemn their author to a camp of internment. In these circumstances it is perhaps not surprising that Egyptians permitted England to shape the destiny of their country without remonstrance. The nation in fact was cowed. Yet a few did summon enough courage to present their views to the British Agency. These spirited gentlemen argued in favour of an independent Egypt, and were prepared themselves to answer for their country's loyalty to Great Britain. In sympathy with their views was the Prime Minister, but perceiving that Great Britain had decided the problem in a different sense he withdrew his support.

On the 18th December His Britannic Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs gave notice that the Suzerainty of Turkey over Egypt was terminated. On the following day the same authority announced that H.H. Abbas Hilmi Pasha had been deposed from the Khedivate, and that the dignity with the title of Sultan had been offered to Prince Hussein Kamil Pasha, eldest living Prince of the family of Mehemet Ali, and accepted by him. The sterling character of the new ruler had long been known to British and Egyptians. He had led a blameless and patriarchal life, and avoided the pitfalls of political intrigue. His courage, both physical and moral, was undeniable. On his attempted assassination later, he preserved admirable composure, and showed the same calm indifference to the threats of future punishment which the Khedive in Constantinople showered upon him. Prince Hussein, indeed, had little affection and less respect for his nephew. To the last he regarded Abbas as an unprincipled adventurer, too much of a poltroon to be greatly wicked. Prince Hussein was the first ruler of Egypt to insist that the private lives of Ministers and Officers of the Household must be free from reproach. One of his earliest acts was to demand the resignation of two high officials of the State, whose conduct fell below the standard of morality which he set up. Over his immediate circle the Sultan exercised despotic power, and the fellahin preserved a remarkable respect for his personality.<sup>1</sup> Prince Hussein Kamil

<sup>1</sup> Many strange stories were current once on this point. There is one which amusingly illustrates the extraordinary credulity of Egyptians. The Prince, when absent from his agricultural properties, resided in a magnificent palace on the outskirts of Cairo. One morning an Englishman living near by asked his gardener what was the news of the day: 'Haven't you heard?' replied the man in amazement. 'A few hours ago His Highness sent for Cromer, and Cromer was late. So his Highness grew angry and saying, "I'll teach him a lesson", called for a cab and drove off to Cairo. Just at this spot he



Pasha also took time to consider the invitation of Great Britain. He had reached a period of life when authority loses some of the attractions which its exercise presents to younger men, and before accepting the offer of His Majesty's Government he insisted that some of the restrictions upon the prerogatives of the Throne be removed. Abbas Hilmi, for example, had not been in a position to bestow Turkish orders and ranks upon his subjects : and Prince Hussein objected strongly to a similar slight upon the Sultanate. There was in fact a curious streak of childish megalomania in the character of the Prince, and nothing better illustrated the weakness than the remarkable pains which His Highness took to design a suitable uniform to be worn by his guests. He had every reason to condemn the Stambuli, a hideous travesty of the European frock-coat, which Turkey had imposed as the Court costume of Egyptians : but it is doubtful if the flamboyant appearance of the new dress was not a worse eyesore than the sombre ugliness of the Stambuli. The Sultan kept a hospitable table and, unlike the Khedive, did not confine his invitations to a select few. Very properly he considered that the State should defray some of the additional expense incurred in support of the dignity of the Throne, and he required a large addition to the old Civil List.<sup>1</sup> But it

met the Lord, who ran up to His Highness and saluting, cried, " Pardon pardon, your Highness, my delay." " What," said the Prince, " pardon you, the son of a dog. Take that, and that," and, added the gardener, ' he beat Cromer soundly with a stick.' ' But, O Ahmed,' asked the Englishman, ' did you yourself witness the incident ? ' ' No,' replied the man regretfully, ' it would have been a fine sight. But plenty of people saw it, and the town talks of nothing else. Is that not so, Mohammed ? ' inviting a bystander to confirm the story. ' It is so ', replied Mohammed. ' Ahmed speaks no more than the truth,' and the story was the subject of excited discussion in every fellah's hovel for many months.

<sup>1</sup> The Khedive had been in receipt of £100,000 a year. A further £50,000 was allotted to the Sultan.

would be a mistake to believe from that fact that his ruling passion was money. He was, on the contrary, a generous soul whose purse was open to every deserving recipient. At heart and by profession an agriculturist of high order, he knew the value of wealth too well to squander his own money on the entertainment of officials. His private revenues were expended in a more practical direction.

Following the example set by General Maxwell, who adopted the form of a second proclamation to explain the intention of martial law, the Acting British Agent set forth in a communication<sup>1</sup> addressed to Prince Hussein the reasons which had induced His Majesty's Government to declare a Protectorate over Egypt. In this document the hostile acts of which Turkey had been guilty were briefly recited, and the conclusion stated that the Ottoman rights over Egypt had become forfeit thereby to the King. Repeating the assurance that Great Britain accepted full responsibility for the defence of the country, His Majesty's Government bound themselves on the conclusion of hostilities to secure the revision of the Capitulations, to promote the spread of education, and to associate the governed with the task of government. Lastly, Egyptians were urged to believe that Great Britain had been influenced by no spirit of hostility towards the Khalifate, inasmuch as history gave ample proof that Egyptian loyalty towards that spiritual Power was independent of political ties between Egypt and Turkey. Sultan Hussein, in inviting the Prime Minister to continue to hold office, declared that the more precise definition of the future relations between Great Britain and Egypt would remove misunderstanding, facilitate co-operation, and unite all political parties. His assertions savoured of optimism. Either His Highness was unaware of the strength of Egyptian

<sup>1</sup> 19th December 1914.

feeling, or deliberately closed his eyes to the facts. Rushdi Pasha, more cautious and better instructed, merely replied signifying his acceptance of the invitation. The other Ministers followed suit.

Thus departed Abbas Hilmi, the last of the Khedives of Egypt. He was neither a good nor a wise ruler, even if his conduct is judged by Egyptian, less rigid than European, standards, and although he exercised to the end of his reign considerable influence over the nation, no man placed complete trust either in his word or in his actions. A wayward and self-willed boy, he became a perverse and unreliable man swayed by caprice and intrigue. The faults of character perhaps were not wholly of his own making. His upbringing had not been very fortunate, and the band of unscrupulous adventurers who surrounded the Throne did not allow the better side of his nature to develop. Under their influence he quarrelled first with Lord Cromer and then with Lord Kitchener. The patience of both was severely tried by his mischievous efforts to frustrate their plans : but while Cromer bore with the evil, Kitchener was less merciful. Matters, indeed, in the summer of 1914 had come to such a pass that the British Agent had been constrained to complain to His Majesty's Government. The Khedive would listen to no advice and to no remonstrance. He had been invited to dismiss from the Palace some of the more disreputable individuals of the Household, believed to be inimical to the interests of Great Britain : but beyond a vague undertaking to consider the matter he took no step to comply with the request. So blind was His Highness to the gravity of his personal position that simultaneously he announced his intention of paying a visit to London, and was genuinely surprised when the Foreign Office intimated that he would do well to postpone his journey.

When meddling in political intrigue the Khedive

appeared to lose the quality of imagination which he displayed to so great advantage in business. No one in Egypt had a keener eye for any commercial proposition which offered profitable possibilities. He planned vast undertakings, from the construction of railways across the desert to rebuilding entire quarters in Cairo. It was when his mind passed from conception to execution that he lost his natural shrewdness. To save a few piastres he made use of incompetent and dishonest agents. He was cheated abominably, and when war broke out was nearly at the end of his liquid resources. From a business point of view, indeed, the War was a godsend to Abbas Hilmi Pasha. The Official Receiver took over and administered henceforth the Khedive's various properties, to the great advantage of their owner. Though His Highness was strangely unreliable, he himself was the most unsuspecting of men towards those who proclaimed themselves to be his loyal servants: and some part of the unhappy relations which existed between him and the representatives of Great Britain was due to the childlike faith which he reposed in the fidelity of his own suite. He was victimized frequently by his most trusted adherents.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Khedive was cheated by every one; even by servants he trusted most. Before setting out upon the Sacred Pilgrimage he sent an advance party to Jedda to hire the necessary number of camels. Abbas Hilmi was amazed at the extortionate prices asked: but the explanation given, that the rates had gone up once owners learnt that the animals were required for the Khedive of Egypt, partially contented him. While bumping across the desert on his camel, His Highness, always on the look-out for scraps of information, tried vainly to get the fellow leading the animal to talk. Losing patience he exclaimed at last, 'You're a sulky person. Here am I, because I am the Khedive of Egypt, paying twice as much as the ordinary pilgrim for each camel, and you won't answer as much as a "Yes" or a "No" to any of my questions.' 'Twice as much!' shouted back the driver. 'Nothing of the sort. I get only half the usual price. The Bey who hired the camels said the Khedive wouldn't pay a piastre more.' The advance party, presumably, had pocketed the difference.

He had no scruples in making use of the services of officials of the Egyptian Government in the furtherance of his schemes. A good deal of the preliminary work of developing his agricultural property in Asia Minor was performed by them. Even Ministers were impressed, and more than one spent an uncomfortable summer at Dalaman, studying the needs of the Khedive's estate.<sup>1</sup> As for the officers and men of the

<sup>1</sup> He would invoke also the assistance of British officials. Among gentlemen honoured with such an invitation was one from the Egyptian Government who consented readily enough to map the estate. The Khedive talked very frankly to him, and on one occasion described how he had secured possession of the property. The guest wrote down an account of the conversation, which throws an interesting sidelight upon His Highness's character.

EXTRACT FROM PRIVATE DIARY OF . . . . .

*His Highness the Khedive and Dalaman.*

'The reason for my determination to buy Dalaman valley was somewhat as follows :

'Several years ago I quarrelled with the late Sultan Abdel Hameed, and consequently, instead of going to Constantinople for my summer holiday, I went to Rhodes. There I purchased an extremely good Rahwan horse, and in order to thoroughly enjoy riding it, I crossed over to Asia Minor and started on an expedition along the coast of Anatolia.

'One day, when on one of my journeys, I entered the Dalaman Valley, and I was so much struck with its farming possibilities that I determined on the spot to buy it.

'I promptly returned to Rhodes and sent my agent, Ahmed Agha, to arrange a sale. The news reached the Sultan, who was furious. He did all he could to hinder the sale, and to interfere with my agents, and he even went so far as to send an order to imprison any servant of mine who should be found in Makri or Dalaman.

'However, in spite of this opposition, Ahmed Agha managed to conclude a bargain to buy me three estates of lands for the sum of £4,500, when the Sultan issued an express command that no land was to be sold to me in Dalaman on any conditions whatsoever.

'It was thus for a time impossible to further the negotiations, and the owners of the farms who had formerly agreed to sell for £4,500 now raised the price up to £30,000. But by prolonged bargaining I finally reduced the price to £12,000, and I told the proprietors that the money would be paid to them at a Bank in Smyrna on condition that they closed the bargain then and there. They agreed. But the Sultan moved again. He sent an Inspector to report on Dalaman

Bodyguard, they would pass the summer of each year in this lonely district digging and delving. He was a hard master to dependents, and beyond presenting the officers of the party with an occasional box of sweetmeats His Highness did nothing to mitigate the discomfort of their lives at Dalaman. More serious was the stream of criticism which was applied to the notorious traffic in grades and decorations. It became understood throughout Egypt that the rank of Pashalik and Beylik could be obtained by the simple method of paying down a fixed sum. Preliminary negotiations were conducted by recognized brokers who approached wealthy Egyptians openly upon the subject. Egypt no doubt is not the only country where titles are bought and sold; but there is a wide distinction between the practice of expending the money received from such transactions upon public objects and of allowing it to drop into the pockets of private individuals. The Khedive could not have been in ignorance of the business which was being conducted in his name, and he would have protected his reputation better by putting a summary stop to the trade. But His Highness was fated to be exploited by every needy adventurer in Egypt.

Despite his arbitrary and unconstitutional methods

and to let him know if it was worth while for him, the Sultan, to buy up the whole valley himself. As soon as I heard of this game, I sent off a trusted servant with a large sum of money to meet the Inspector at Aidin. This he did, and he bribed the Inspector so heavily that he returned from Aidin to Constantinople with such a depressing account of Dalaman—a wretched place swarming with mosquitoes and absolutely irreclaimable swamp in the purchase of which the Khedive had been thoroughly deceived—that the Sultan gave up all idea of further interference, and from that moment I was left unmolested.

‘After the defeat of the Inspector, I then found that the owners of the land had been secretly bargaining with him against me, so I wired to the Smyrna Bank to stop all payments to them until I gave my further consent. I have never given them my consent, and up till now I have paid them nothing. They have given me much trouble, but now it is I who will trouble them.’

throughout his reign, the Khedive maintained a surprising ascendancy over Egyptians. The glory of an autocracy dies hard, and while Abbas Hilmi possessed the attributes of a despot, his subjects were slow to perceive that their ruler was not in a position to exercise them. A few of the more instructed, anxious that Egypt's political development should proceed upon democratic lines and not upon the rule of a single individual, strove to enlighten their fellow countrymen upon the difference. The aspirations of this little band were welcomed by Lord Cromer; but their programme made little headway in the country when it became known that the Khedive was fiercely opposed to the party of reform. Would-be adherents to the new political cause had weighty reasons to exercise caution: for Egyptians incurring the displeasure of the Palace generally had cause later to rue the fact. By some mysterious means the administrative machine would be set in motion to harass and crush such persons. But it was not always necessary for him to descend to such methods. When he chose, he could exert a curious personal magnetism which cast a spell over Egyptians. Ministers would obey his slightest nod, and humbler folk abase themselves before him, one and all ready to dance to the tune which he called. Many Englishmen too found him, if capricious, a most attractive personality. He could talk with consummate skill upon most subjects, and, unlike some princes, was as anxious to learn his visitors' views as to air his own. His sense of humour was so acute that he was usually ready to tell a story against himself. There were instances also when he displayed unexpected consideration, such as that of his hurried journey from the Continent to England to bid good-bye to Sir Eldon Gorst, lying on his death-bed. His nature, indeed, was not altogether ignoble: he was the victim of a vicious environment which obscured the better qualities of his character.

His Highness had displayed, when Khedive, so many acts of kindness to individual Englishmen, that surprise occasionally was expressed at his indifference to the sufferings of British prisoners of war in Turkey. There is some reason to believe that Abbas Hilmi was watched so closely during his sojourn in Constantinople that any expression or action of his denoting interest in Great Britain was misconstrued by the Turkish military authorities. It was even said that the latter were only half convinced of the Khedive's loyalty to their cause, and it is certain that the Grand Vizier, Said Halim, an Egyptian Prince, was no friend of his. Said Halim was reputed with justice to entertain designs upon the throne of Egypt, if the War went in favour of the Central Powers, and he was unlikely to become surety for a relation who stood in the way of his ambition. The story is current that His Majesty's Government offered to replace the Khedive on the throne at the cessation of hostilities, provided he withdrew to a neutral country and abstained from interference with Egypt.<sup>1</sup> His Highness seems to have made no reply to the proposal. He may have treated it with disdain, or have scented some trap: or he may have been powerless then to leave Constantinople. His efforts to stir up unrest in Egypt were half-hearted, and, except upon the conjecture that he was closely watched by the Turks, his conduct during the War is puzzling. It is surprising, for example, that he did not visit Syria and Palestine and address words of encouragement to the units of the Expeditionary Force collected to conquer Egypt. His place as lawful Khedive would seem to be with that army: unless, as is highly probable, Constantinople feared his good faith.

<sup>1</sup> At an earlier date His Majesty's Government had suggested for reasons of health that His Highness would do well to postpone his return to Egypt. Advice in such terms is synonymous with an order: and the Khedive accepted the communication as such.



## VI

### TURKISH PREPARATIONS AND ATTACK UPON THE SUEZ CANAL

IF it is often difficult to understand why individuals, ordinarily prudent, suddenly embark upon rash enterprise, it is even more incomprehensible why nations, provoked by no assault or insult, involved in no dispute, and entangled by no formal obligation, should engage in war, the most hazardous of all human speculations. Turkey, on the 1st August 1914, apparently had no one of these excuses to intervene in the trouble brewing between the Allies and the Central Powers. Neither her territorial nor her sovereign rights were threatened: her diplomacy had not been flouted: and publicly she was bound by no Treaty of Alliance, offensive or defensive, to any one of the parties in the dispute. Whatever the origin of the quarrel she, at least, seemed remote from it, and her interests unaffected so long as the neighbouring kingdoms of Rumania, Bulgaria, and Greece retained their own neutrality. On her own side Turkey appeared to have everything to lose and little to gain by becoming a combatant. Egypt long ago had been written off the national balance sheet as a total loss, and Russian designs upon Constantinople, held firmly in check by British and French diplomacy, had become faint memories. In short, whether the Allies or the Central Powers triumphed in the end, the Ottoman Government could have small hope that the victors would restore Egypt to the Empire, or little anxiety that they would admit Russian pretensions over the Bosphorus. Moreover, the country was the least able in Europe to

support an exhausting war. There was no money in the Treasury, and no credit abroad. The Civil Service was corrupt, trade was stagnant, and the fighting spirit of the population weakened by an unceasing succession of campaigns in the Balkans and in Northern Africa. None the less, Turkey mobilized her armies on the 2nd August 1914.

The Ottoman Government described the measure as an act of precaution; but in reality it was the preliminary of a declaration of war upon the Allies. Germany and Turkey in the closing days of July 1914 had reached a mutual understanding.<sup>1</sup> The details of the pact are still undisclosed, and what Turkey was to receive for her assistance is not known. Aggrandizement at the expense of Russia perhaps: territorial concessions in Persia, no doubt. But fruitful Egypt surely must have been a prize reserved for the other partner. The secret of the Alliance was well kept by the contracting parties. Although so important an

<sup>1</sup> Djemal Pasha, Minister of Marine, and during the War the Commander-in-Chief in the Palestine area, in his *Memories of a Turkish Statesman, 1912-19* (Hutchinson), declares categorically that 'the Turco-German Alliance was not concluded during the War, as people have hitherto believed. It was certainly signed on 2nd August 1914, but negotiations had been in progress long before the War.'

Mr. Winston Churchill in his reminiscences of the War is still more explicit. In describing the escape out of the Mediterranean of the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*, the two German cruisers, he says, 'Not until long after did we learn the blasting secret which would have destroyed all our doubts. Already in the crisis of July the leaders of the Young Turk Party were in vital negotiation with the Germans, and on August 3 the German Admiralty telegraphed to Admiral Souchon on board the *Goeben* that an alliance had been signed with Turkey, and that he was to proceed at once to Constantinople. Thus all the time we were deceived.'

Major-General Sir M. Bowman Manifold, in his *Outline of the Egyptian and Palestine Campaigns, 1914-18* (Mackay & Co., Chatham), writes, 'It is known now that on the 4th August the Kaiser informed the Greek Minister in Berlin that an alliance existed between Germany and Turkey.'

agreement could hardly have been settled in the space of a few hours, no hint that conversations were taking place on the subject had reached the ears of His Majesty's Government. Nowhere in the White Book, containing copies of the communications which passed between the Foreign Office and the Embassy in Constantinople, and between the Embassy and the Ottoman Government, is there trace that suspicion was aroused. The representatives of Great Britain were not the only men to be deceived. Even so shrewd an observer as the Minister of the United States remained in ignorance of the agreement. The Turkish professions of neutrality were accepted by the Allies and neutrals as satisfactory evidence of her intentions.<sup>1</sup>

Yet even in a peaceful mobilization of the military forces of the Ottoman Empire there was an indirect menace to the Allies, since Germany exercised a large measure of control over the army. During many years that Power had been striving to wrest from Great Britain the influence which the latter traditionally enjoyed in Constantinople, and, in the protracted duel between the two, the former recently had won a notable triumph. The Ottoman Government watched the struggle for their favour with outward indifference. There were moments when the attitude of Turkish Ministers suggested a desire to play off one against the other: there were periods when it suggested their suspicions that Germany was bent more upon injuring England than advancing the interests of Turkey. But England was slow to take advantage of the favourable situation which prestige of past generations had placed in Constantinople, and on more

<sup>1</sup> It is worth while observing that Mr. C. A. Beard does not refer in his book, *Cross Currents in Europe To-Day* (published by Marshall Jones, Boston, U.S.A., 1922), to the existence of an understanding between Germany and Turkey, though he devotes a third of the pages to the analysis of other secret alliances.

than one occasion in recent years she had unheedingly wounded Turkish susceptibilities. Turkey could neither forget nor forgive England's blunt demand in 1906 for the recall of the Ottoman patrols from Egyptian territory at Akaba ; nor the strict neutrality which she had imposed later upon Egypt when the Ottoman Army was campaigning in Tripoli. Other conditions had operated, when the Young Turks came into power, to weaken British influence in Constantinople and to strengthen that of Germany. London was reluctant to be associated with any programme which would increase the authority of the Committee of Union and Progress. Germany, on the other hand, if she had no money to lend, was untroubled by such scruples, and all influential elements of society in Berlin warmly supported the development of a friendly understanding with the Young Turks. The great banking and business houses dreamt of the commercial exploitation of Turkey in Asia, and advocates of colonial expansion saw in that territory the possible fruition of their hopes. The Kaiser enthusiastically embraced the policy. He toured royally and dramatically through Ottoman dominions urging the Turkish Moslem to regard the German Christian as his brother. Lastly, the Great General Staff cast covetous eyes upon the military resources of the Turkish Empire. In January 1914 Germany took a long stride forward towards the achievement of the last ambition : she persuaded the Ottoman Government to entrust the reorganization of their army to German brains. Outwardly there was nothing in the concession to excite suspicion. Foreign missions at that epoch were no novelty in Turkey : England was advising the Ministry of Marine, and Germany had been performing a similar service to the Ministry of War. But no mission hitherto had exercised executive authority, and Great Britain and France learned with

pained surprise that the Ottoman Government proposed in reorganizing the army to depart from this principle. One German officer was to be appointed commander of the 1st Army Corps quartered in Constantinople, and a second to be his chief of staff. A firm protest upon the part of the Allies compelled General Liman von Sanders to retire from his Corps command, and to accept the post of Inspector-General: but his subordinates continued to perform executive duties. Among the lieutenants was a middle-aged Bavarian artillery officer, Major Kress von Kressenstein, destined later to play an important part in the campaign on the Egyptian frontier.

Long before 1914 the promises of better and more liberal government, so freely made by the Young Turks when they took office, had vanished. The Ottoman Empire was subjected to a tyranny little less despotic than that of the Sultans. A triumvirate of Pashas—Enver, Talaat, and Djemal—held the reins of the State coach. Of these men, Enver, Minister of War, occupied the first place in the imagination of his countrymen. By profession a soldier, he had acquired some reputation for leadership in his conduct of the campaign in Tripoli. Swayed by vanity and ambition, the Minister early in his career had succumbed to German flattery. Berlin made no mistake in the choice of their agent: for the hesitating acceptance by the Ottoman Government of the presence of a German military mission in Constantinople was due mainly to Enver's enthusiasm for the proposal. But if Enver governed the army, Talaat, Minister of Interior, exerciser of administrative patronage, held all other strings in his hand. Troubled with no heart and with no conscience, already he had acquired unenviable fame for reputed complicity in recent Armenian massacres. He was utterly untrustworthy, both as man and politician. He confided in no one:

his own colleagues possibly least of all. Ambition and power were his only gods. The third figure of the triumvirate was Djemal Pasha, Minister of Marine. Even before the War, Djemal was chiefly notorious for his unconcealed dislike of European interference in the domestic affairs of Turkey, and had he alone controlled her fortunes there would have been in Constantinople neither British nor German advisers. As it was, he tried to play off one against the other. Thus he accepted and supported the presence of a British naval mission as a counterpoise to German control of the army, and the appointment of the Minister of Marine on the outbreak of war to the command of far-distant Palestine may have been due partly to his unconcealed nervousness of German professions towards Turkey. Once at his new post Djemal acted with vigour and discretion. He chose subordinates according to their capacity and not from motives of favouritism, and treated the civilian population with a tenderness unusual from a Turk. Von Kressenstein and other German officers who served in this theatre habitually speak well of Djemal's energy and moderation. Officially the superior of Talaat, Enver, and Djemal was Said Halim Pasha, Grand Vizier, and Prince of the Khedivial House of Egypt. Although, like his Imperial master, Said Halim stood for peace, he could not control the actions of Enver and Talaat. He was absorbed, too, with secret ambition, and, in speculating upon his own prospects of ascending the throne of Egypt, he was apt to forget the interests of Turkey.

His Majesty's Government appear to have underestimated the probable effect upon opinion in Constantinople which the seizure at the close of July 1914 of the Turkish battleship, the *Osman I*, just completing construction in a Tyne shipbuilding yard, would produce. Although the action was legal and justified by the circumstances of the hour, none the less it was

unfortunate, since the loss of the ship created intense resentment in Constantinople against Great Britain. The disappointment was intelligible. The Ottoman Empire had made prodigious sacrifices to build the vessel, and Great Britain's arbitrary action provoked noisy and angry protests. While popular feeling on the point was at its height, the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*, in accordance with orders from Berlin, passed the Dardanelles and anchored off Constantinople. The German Ambassador, making haste to draw advantage from the situation, placed the two cruisers at the disposal of Turkey.<sup>1</sup> What programme lay behind his offer was quickly evident. Within the next few days a number of German naval officers and marines arrived in Constantinople, and it was clear that Germany intended to control the whole Turkish fleet. In vain the British Ambassador complained of the unfriendliness of these acts, and of others equally infringing the professed neutrality of Turkey, notably the mining of the Dardanelles<sup>2</sup> and the hurried construction of defensive works on the shores of those straits. Talaat and his colleagues met each protest with mendacious excuses. Presently the reported concentration of troops in Syria and Palestine roused His Majesty's Government to state explicitly their position in Egypt. They announced that while the Suez Canal was being patrolled by troops, no forward movement into Sinai would be made, and expressed

<sup>1</sup> The knowledge that Germany and Turkey on the 2nd August 1914 had concluded an alliance dispels the belief that the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* took refuge in the Bosphorus by accident. Djemal Pasha, in *Memories of a Turkish Statesman*, frankly declares that the offer of Von Waggenheim, German Ambassador to Turkey, was 'not a real, but merely a fictitious sale'. Djemal continues, 'We were informed that as the Emperor could not sell a single ship in the navy without a decree of the Reichstag, the real sale could not be carried out till the end of the War, and the Reichstag had conveyed its assent.'

<sup>2</sup> 20th August 1914.

their readiness to preserve the existing status of Egypt, if Turkey on her part remained neutral. In the communications which passed during the two following months between the British Ambassador and the Ottoman Government, three points stand out clearly. Firstly, the unconsciousness of England that an understanding existed between Germany and Turkey : secondly, the repeated assurance on the part of the latter of her neutrality : and lastly, the unceasing commission of acts which gave the lie to Turkish professions of good faith. The patience of Great Britain was sorely tried. In spite of the rigorous provisions of the Treaties of Paris and the Dardanelles in 1856 and in 1871 respectively, the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* had been permitted to pass unchallenged into the Bosphorus ; armed Bedouins, at Turkish instigation, were threatening the security of the Suez Canal ; Russia had been attacked in the Black Sea ; and finally the Dardanelles was closed to all commercial shipping. On top of these infringements of neutrality the Ottoman Government was impudent enough to complain of the presence of a British ship of war in Turkish territorial waters. A sloop had been dispatched to the Persian Gulf to watch Shatt El Arab. At that moment it was very far from certain whether the ship in question was not lying in Persian waters ; but that doubt did not deter the Ottoman Government from demanding in peremptory terms the withdrawal of the sloop. Finally, an insolent communication upon the subject of Egypt addressed by the Government to the British Embassy in the last days of October destroyed any remaining hope of peace. Turkey, the message declared, was indifferent to the fate of India ; but Egypt, in the opinion of the Government was, and always would be considered, an integral part of the Ottoman Empire. Reluctantly the Allies took up the challenge and broke off diplomatic relations. Why



Turkey continued to maintain the pretence of neutrality for so many weeks is not precisely known; but her hesitation may be fairly ascribed to two main causes. Enver and other military advisers were desirous of gaining time to complete mobilization,<sup>1</sup> and Germany, on other grounds, had counselled her ally to await an opportune moment.<sup>2</sup>

While instructed opinion in Constantinople recognized the physical difficulties attached to any military expedition against Egypt, public imagination was profoundly stirred by the proposal to march against the Suez Canal.<sup>3</sup> Egypt, treacherously filched from the Empire, was worth many sacrifices to regain, and as France regarded Alsace and Lorraine, so, it was argued, must

<sup>1</sup> The Turkish Army in August 1914 was organized to form 15 Divisions. That number was immediately doubled: and at the date of the declaration of war the Ottoman Empire was able to dispose of 300,000 troops. Ultimately she raised 800,000 (*An Outline of the Egyptian and Palestine Campaigns, 1914 to 1918*).

<sup>2</sup> Major-General Sir M. Bowman Manifold skilfully analyses this point. Summarized, his conclusions may be stated as follows: Turkey delayed her entrance into the War to suit the plans of the Central Powers. If Germany had been successful in 1914, the Turkish Army intact would have been a valuable weapon to use against Russia and Great Britain. But the early course of the campaign in Europe did not run as smoothly as the Central Powers had expected. Great Britain joined France. Russia conducted her mobilization more rapidly than had been anticipated, and invaded East Prussia. Germany met in September with a reverse on the Marne. The Austro-Hungarian armies had suffered a similar fate at Lemberg. Not until the close of October did Germany perceive that her pre-war forecast of events must be modified. To divert the attention of Russia and Great Britain from the battlefields of Europe, she instructed Turkey to declare war.

<sup>3</sup> Oberst Freiherr Kress von Kressenstein, in an article contributed to the *Fahrbuch des Bundes der Asienkämpfer 1921* (published by the *Orient-Buchhandlung*, Berlin), entitled 'Zwischen Kaukasus und Sinai', declares that on the mobilization of the Turkish armies instructions were dispatched to Zaki Pasha, commanding IVth Army Corps at Damascus, to make preparations for an attack upon Egypt.

Turkey look upon Egypt. But the Supreme Military Command was less enthusiastic on the point. German advice suggested the minor and less hazardous operation of blocking the Suez Canal: an objective to be attained by launching a series of raids from a base in Palestine. The difficulty of maintaining the long line of communications between Constantinople and Aleppo, and thence to the southern frontier of Palestine, were more apparent to the German than to the Turkish mind. Until communication was perfected, the prospect of concentrating within striking distance of Egypt a force adequately equipped, and sufficiently strong, to undertake the conquest of that country was remote. Further, if the invader was successful in entering Cairo, so long as the Allied navies dominated the Mediterranean his position would be precarious. From the German point of view the proper strategical and tactical objective of Turkey in the Egyptian theatre was to block the Suez Canal. But Djemal Pasha, the new Commander-in-Chief of this front, lightly brushed aside the risks. His vain imagination was fired by the thought of a triumphal entry into Cairo, and he allowed himself to be called 'The Saviour of Egypt'. To the friends who assembled at Haidar Pasha to wish him good-bye he declared as he stepped into the train, 'I shall not return until I have entered Cairo'. Such optimism was ridiculous, even for a Turk. Djemal had not troubled to reflect over the material difficulties of his task, placing his trust in two psychological factors. Firstly, that Egyptians would rise in revolt against the British Forces in occupation of their country, and secondly, that the Turkish troops would be inspired to perform prodigies of valour by the thought of the rich booty awaiting them in Egypt. He was disappointed in both expectations. A less superficial study of the situation would have led the Turkish Commander-in-Chief to different conclusions.

The Egyptians did not desire to see Turkey installed in the place of England, and the Arab troops of Ottoman armies were too suspicious and too jealous of Turkish ambition to believe that any share of the spoil would fall to them.

In order that an appreciation may be formed of the obstacles to be overcome by the Turkish command before a force of any respectable size could be assembled in Southern Palestine, it is desirable to give a short account of the lines of communication. They were certainly of prodigious length. From Constantinople to the Suez Canal the distance approximately is 1,200 miles, the final stage of 200 miles traversing an area provided with no metalled roads and no railways. In the early months of the War the staff of the lines of communication were wholly Turkish, a few Germans being posted only at crucial and widely separated points. The organization does not appear to have been very successful even at first: and later, when German and Austrian units were serving on the Palestine front, it became actually necessary to provide these troops with their own lines of communication. Duplication of the supply organization of an army in the field is certain to produce friction, and a German officer<sup>1</sup> records the existence of perpetual ill-feeling between the personnel of the two staffs. In his experience the parallel lines of communication were hardly worth the friction which their presence engendered. He blames both parties impartially, alleging, on the one hand, that Mohammedans have no gift for organization, but confessing, on the other, that Germans are constitutionally unfitted to work in harmony with Eastern races. Altogether Captain Merkel is an honest and candid observer.

<sup>1</sup> One chapter (written by Captain Merkel, Chief of Staff, German lines of communication, Damascus) of the *Fahrbuch des Bundes der Asienkämpfer 1921*, is devoted to an account of the Syrian-Palestine lines of communication.

With the possible exception of the British in Mesopotamia, there was probably no theatre of war wherein lines of communication presented greater difficulty of organization than the Syrian-Palestine area did to the Turks. Their lines of communication<sup>1</sup> may be divided, for the convenience of explanation, into four sections: from Constantinople to Aleppo; from Aleppo to El Fule, the terminus of the Syrian railway system; from El Fule to Bir Saba (Beersheeba), the final point of concentration of the Expeditionary Corps; and from Bir Saba to the Suez Canal. Each section had its peculiar difficulties. Rail communication in the first section was broken at two points: the Taurus and the Amanus mountain ranges. Passengers therefore proceeding to Aleppo had to make a portage across each pass. Two good and well-graded roads carried them over the Taurus: but the severe slopes of the Amanus Pass, and the wretched surface of the road traversing it, made portage arduous in summer, and often impracticable in the winter. An alternative route avoiding the Amanus mountains leads from Adana through Payas to Alexandretta, and thence over the Bailan Pass into Aleppo. But its use in war is open to the serious objection that troops at certain points are exposed to fire from seaward. Turkish Head-quarters accepted that risk, and along the Adana-Alexandretta route the 10th Division, with artillery and pontoons intended for bridging the Suez Canal, marched without mishap. No explanation has been yet afforded of the failure of the Allied Naval Command to block the Payas-Alexandretta road.<sup>2</sup> The operation

<sup>1</sup> See Plate II.

<sup>2</sup> In *The Times History of the War* the writer of the story of the Defence of the Suez Canal gives a vivid account of the consequences which resulted from the negligence of the Allies to prevent the enemy's use of this alternative route. H.M.S. *Doris* and a French cruiser or two put in some useful if belated work on this station. H.M.S. *Doris* was particularly active in destroying viaducts, bridges, and telegraph

presented no particular difficulty : and the opportunity of delaying the dispatch of the early reinforcements to Djemal Pasha was lost.

In Syria and in Palestine there were in 1914 two groups of railways : the Hedjaz system and the lines owned and operated by private companies. The first ran from Damascus to Medina, a distance of 800 miles. Linked with it were the branches Haifa, El Fule, Deraa (approximately 100 miles in length), and two shorter and less important lines. In the second group were the railways from Aleppo to Rayak (210 miles), Damascus to Beirut (300 miles), Homs to Tripoli (60 miles), and Jaffa to Jerusalem (55 miles). Broadly speaking, from Aleppo to the Palestine border troops could be transported by train ; thence further progress south could be made only by road. The fuel situation of the Syrian-Palestine railways in the autumn of 1914 was not encouraging. Two coal colliers had been discharged at Haifa during the month preceding the outbreak of war, but their cargoes and the stocks existing in the country only assured supply for a few months. Locomotives and other rolling stocks were adequate for the moment. At all events nine military trains, each composed of thirteen carriages, were dispatched daily from Damascus during a short period.<sup>1</sup> None the less, the future outlook of the Turkish Railway operating staff was not cheerful.

While it was known in Cairo that large numbers of

lines. The enemy, no less supine, watched unconcernedly the work of destruction. A few trenches were dug on the sea-shore and manned by some indifferent troops ; but the *Doris* raided the coast almost at will. There was no attempt on the part of the enemy to protect the Gulf of Ayas by mining its waters, or to secure the safety of the little port of Alexandretta.

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to learn from Captain Merkel's articles that early in 1915 Germany was asked to allocate to the Syrian-Palestine railways twenty new locomotives. The first engine did not reach Damascus until the end of 1917.

troops and quantities of munitions and supplies were being dispatched to Aleppo in the first weeks following Turkey's entrance into the War, not until the close of December did Cairo Head-quarters obtain information from a reliable source as to the strength of the Expeditionary Corps intended for the invasion of Egypt. The earliest news on the point came from the British Military Attaché in Sofia. He reported that the force would consist of 39,000 rifles, four companies of machine-guns, fourteen field batteries, fifteen mountain batteries, two battalions of pioneers, and five sanitary companies, with fifty dépôt battalions in support. From other quarters it was learnt that military trains conveying a heavy howitzer battery, bridging pontoons, and motor lorries had passed through Adana. Later, the scattered units of the Fourth Army Corps, with seven heavy guns and a number of heavy draught oxen (intended obviously to haul the heavy artillery and pontoons), were reported to be concentrated in Syria. On the 15th January the Intelligence Branch of H.Q., Egypt, estimated that distributed between Adana and Bir Saba there were six divisions of infantry, ten heavy guns, eighty Krupp Q.F. field-guns, and an uncertain number of howitzers and machine-guns. It was known, also, that a transport column of 10,000 camels had been collected at Jerusalem, and were employed in moving munitions and supplies to Bir Saba. The organization of the transport appears on the whole to have been successful. The head of the American Mission Hospital in Jerusalem was confident that at least 5,000 tons of supplies in the space of a few weeks were dumped at Gaza alone. Thousands of empty petroleum tins and great quantities of oranges were sent to the southern bases in Palestine: new wells were sunk on the roads along which the Turkish troops marched, and rest camps prepared. Arrangements for the reception of the sick and

wounded were as follows : Base hospitals at Jerusalem (under American Red Cross direction) and Field hospitals (staffed with German doctors and nursing sisters) at El Auja and Bir Saba. But in the end the strength of the Turkish Expeditionary Corps, when concentrated at the advanced base of Bir Saba, fell below the expectations of Djemal. It amounted to no more than 20,000 rifles, nine field batteries, and one 15-cm. howitzer battery.<sup>1</sup> With this slender force he set out to conquer Egypt.

Up to the beginning of the New Year British intelligence had gathered its news of the enemy's preparations in Syria and Palestine mainly from the accounts of refugees ; but on the 28th December that source of information came to an end. The Turks closed the seaports of Syria and Palestine, and Egypt in future had to depend for news upon a service of paid agents. From their reports it appeared that battalion officers and the rank and file felt little confidence in the success of the projected expedition.<sup>2</sup> At the last moment Djemal himself appeared to share their doubts : for he urged Constantinople to reinforce the Palestine front. In response to the appeal the Supreme Command dispatched three Divisions, the flower of the Turkish Army, to Syria.<sup>3</sup> But the request was made too late. Before the reinforcements had started, the Allied warships were commanding by their fire long stretches of rail and road between Adana and Toprak Kele, and the troops were forced to march over the Amanus Pass. The task proved to be too great for the capacity of the Turks, and the bulk of the reinforcements got no

<sup>1</sup> These are the figures given by Oberst Kress von Kressenstein.

<sup>2</sup> Fatin Bey, the Kaimakam of Alexandretta, said to the British Vice-Consul of the district, ' You know my position here. I am compelled to be pro-German. If England takes my country, let her not forget me, when choosing her officials.'

<sup>3</sup> From Constantinople, Angora, and Adrianople.

farther than Adana. Their arrest at that point drew Turkish attention to the difficulties of the lines of communication, and a body of 7,000 labourers were hastily collected and set to work upon improving the roads over the mountain passes. But despite this disappointment Djemal would not postpone his attack. Publicly he declared that the smaller the Expeditionary Corps, the less difficulty would there be in providing it with water and food. That fact was evident enough; yet it is scarcely sufficient to explain entirely his obstinate resolution.<sup>1</sup>

In his Chief of Staff, Oberst Freiherr Kress von Kressenstein, Djemal had an officer as resolute as himself. Of the many personalities who fought and planned for Germany in the minor theatres of the European War, Von Kressenstein deserves in the memory of his countrymen as honoured a place as any. He had a gallant spirit. Wherever in Palestine and in Sinai there was fighting, Kressenstein was in the thick of it. Like General Allenby, a later and more renowned captain of war in the Egyptian theatre, this Bavarian officer believed that the proper place of a leader was with the line. There were moments when Von Kressenstein was supported in the field by officers and men of his own country; but there were long and continuous periods when he had to rely solely upon Syrian Turks, poorly equipped and indifferently led. To the credit of these troops it must be said that they did not fail their commander. However often he called upon them, they always responded. For two long years the German battered away at the Canal Defence. His tactical objective from time to time changed: but strategically he was intent upon forcing the enemy to immobilize in

<sup>1</sup> Djemal Pasha in his *Memoirs* states his belief that the British had 35,000 troops on the Canal, and 150,000 in reserve in the interior of Egypt, to oppose his attack.



Egypt large military forces. He was not always successful: but at least he triumphed in January 1916, when three British Army Corps took up position on the Suez Canal to oppose a weak Turkish Division. Indomitable fighter and consummate master of guerilla warfare, Kress von Kressenstein was a worthy opponent of British arms on the Egyptian front.

If the Army of Occupation in Egypt was intended to maintain order over a population of thirteen million souls, and simultaneously to be prepared to protect the Suez Canal against armed attack, it must be confessed that the pre-war establishment<sup>1</sup> was hardly adequate for the dual duty, even if the assistance of the fleet off the northern coast, and in the Canal waters, was assumed. Early in August 1914 all units of the Army of Occupation had been withdrawn from Egypt in the interests of the Expeditionary Force in France. To replace them there came from home a Division<sup>2</sup> (the 42nd Lancashire) and half a dozen yeomanry squadrons. Numerically the Egyptian command gained by the exchange: but there the advantage stopped. Good as the new material appeared to be, it was painfully evident that many weeks must pass before the Division was fit to take the field. The same criticism must be made of the first contingent of the Australian and New Zealand Imperial Forces<sup>3</sup> disembarked in Egypt to undergo training. If fine physique were the sole qualification required by soldiers of a modern army, assuredly the first Australians and New Zealanders to land in Egypt

<sup>1</sup> Four battalions of infantry, one regiment of cavalry, and two batteries of artillery.

<sup>2</sup> The selection by Lord Kitchener of this particular Division for service in Egypt illustrated his quaint humour. 'Lancashire', he is reported to have said, when considering the choice, 'spins cotton. Not a bad thing, then, if Lancashire men see how the raw material is grown.'

<sup>3</sup> Always known in Egypt as the A.I.F.

would have borne off the palm. It was impossible to conceive more splendid specimens of humanity than the rank and file. Tall in stature, broad in chest, they looked what in physique they really were, supermen from another world. Unfortunately the self-control of some of these giants was in inverse ratio to their bodily proportions. Of certain individuals among them, almost it might be said that the finer the body the less the restraint of the mind over its actions. If their courage was divine, their lack of moral instinct seemed inhuman. No doubt they were the exceptions and not the rule: but their misdeeds sadly tarred the reputation of the A.I.F. It is always so in congregations of men: the majority suffer in reputation from the sins of the few. There seemed sometimes no form of temptation, however repulsive, which one type of Australian could resist. He wasted his colossal rate of pay upon pleasures rejected by cleaner-minded men. The fault was not wholly his: for Egypt pandered gladly to his grosser appetites. Unused to restraint, he did not understand why military authority should preach morality to the troops. He had left Australia to fight, not to listen to the teaching of a Sunday school. Instances of serious crime committed by Australian soldiers, mad with drink and licence, increased. It would have been better if the Australian Imperial Forces had applied to the first offenders the drastic penalties which elsewhere pursued an incorrigible soldier. The moral rot would have been stopped. But public opinion in Australia was averse to the infliction by military authority of severe punishment. Thus the opportunity was lost, and the reputation of the A.I.F. unjustly clouded by the vicious follies of a few.<sup>1</sup> But save for these few individuals

<sup>1</sup> Not until March 1915 did the A.I.F. take decided action. They determined then to repatriate a number of the worst offenders. So anxious was authority in no wise to stamp the men as undesirables,

there were strangely attractive qualities in the Australian. His easy gait and carriage, his devil-may-care glance, his simplicity and directness of thought and speech, and lastly his magnificent fighting spirit, excited the admiration of Englishmen. At the heels of the male came the female, equally determined to give helping hands to the mother-country. Hearts of gold had these Australian women, going uncomplainingly day after day on rounds of monotonous duty in hospitals and canteens. They were doing no more than the women of England : but they had travelled a long way to perform these menial tasks. Discomfort and hardship never frightened these gallant souls, fit mates for a race of virile men.

If untrained yet for the field, the Territorials and the Australians, in January 1915, were good enough at least to maintain tranquillity in Egypt, and the Command, therefore, was in a position to allocate without anxiety to the defence of the Suez Canal, the two Divisions<sup>1</sup> of Indian Infantry lent for that purpose. India's response to the appeal of Great Britain for troops on the outbreak of war had been magnificent. Three Divisions had sailed for France,

that berths on an outward-bound P. and O. were engaged for them without informing the local agent of the character of the passengers : and at Port Said one morning, under an armed escort of fifty rank and file, the party arrived. The master of the ship flatly declined to take the passengers on board unless the escort sailed also. The officer of the escort no less emphatically announced his intention of embarking the men, whether the master agreed or not. He might have found difficulty in doing so : for the latter, foreseeing this possibility, prudently had drawn up the gangways and lined the bulwarks with quartermasters to repel all boarders. The situation savoured of the ridiculous, when finally it was suggested that the officer and half a dozen of his escort should proceed to Australia with the party. Head-quarters of the A.I.F. did not question the compromise, and paid the passages of the escort without demur, frankly glad to be rid of the men at any cost.

<sup>1</sup> The 10th and 21st Divisions, known as Indian Expeditionary Forces (e) and (f).

a fourth was in Mesopotamia, a fifth in East Africa, and two more in Egypt. Thus, thanks to India, the commander of the Suez Canal Defence could count upon twenty-four battalions of infantry, a mounted brigade, a camel corps, twelve mountain guns, a detachment of the Royal Flying Corps, a squadron of French sea-planes, and some artillery from the Egyptian Army. Head-quarters were placed in Ismailia, and the line of defence divided into three sectors, Port Said, Ismailia, and Suez.

The infantry units were unequal in fighting power. Units recruited from Brahmin castes will not face an enemy as unflinchingly as Gurkhas or Sikh battalions. The Imperial Service infantry contingents, raised and supported by individual princes, were hardly fitted for more onerous duties than those required by lines of communication troops. The mounted brigade drawn from the same source were equally ill adapted for serious fighting. The force, also, was short of all appliances of modern war. It had no signal troops, no wireless company, and no heavy artillery. Its greatest assets lay in the detachment of the Royal Flying Corps<sup>1</sup> and the French sea-plane squadron. The first, operating from Ismailia, kept under review the movements of the enemy in Sinai, within fifty or sixty miles of the east bank of the Canal: and the second, operating from Port Said, watched the Turkish concentration at Bir Saba, El Arish, and other frontier towns. Not until the spring of 1916 was the British command of the air challenged in the Egyptian front. Sinai offers admirable facilities for flying. Landing places are easy to improvise; visibility is clear; and inclement weather the exception. Time and again forced landings would be made without mishap; the

<sup>1</sup> The detachment sent from India was composed of the following planes: 2 M. Farman (known as Longhorns); 1 M. Farman (known as Shorthorn); 1 M. Farman; 1 B.E.A.

observers would detect the smallest indication of human movements ; and a steady north-west wind could be relied upon to blow, day in and day out, for long periods at a time. The French sea-plane squadron had arrived in Port Said unexpectedly. In itself, the squadron was one of the most complete units ever seen on the Canal, and the personnel the most daring. But the planes lost some of their mobility from the fact that the squadron was without carrier ships. Fortunately, at that moment a number of German tramp steamers were lying in Alexandria and awaiting disposal of the Naval Prize Court. Two of them were selected by General Maxwell, and placed at the disposal of the French.<sup>1</sup> Like the R.F.C., the squadron had brought its own pilots : <sup>2</sup> but both units required observers. There was no difficulty in obtaining volunteers for this perilous service from local sources,

<sup>1</sup> The *Anne Rickmers* and the *Rabenfels*, rechristened later the *Anne* and the *Raven*. For various reasons the Royal Navy declined responsibility either for the employment of the sea-planes or for the maintenance of the carrier ships. The latter therefore commenced their new career under the Red Ensign. The *Anne Rickmers* at the moment of her capture was loaded with valuable mineral ore, and the Prize Court, before surrendering the vessel to the Army, insisted that General Maxwell became personally responsible for the cargo. That officer did not anticipate then that the *Anne* would carry planes elsewhere than in tolerably safe seas, and he was unpleasantly surprised to learn that without his consent the ship had been dispatched to Smyrna. The voyage was unfortunate, for the *Anne* was struck by a mine. The *Raven*, on the other hand, bore a charmed life throughout the War.

<sup>2</sup> The Commanding Officer, Capitaine de Vaisseau de l'Escaille, himself was a magnificent pilot. No type of weather deterred him from making ascents. He was a laconic soul, who dealt in deeds, not words. His little unit of six Nieuports got through a wonderful amount of work, and the contrast between the elaborate organization of the British Naval Sea-plane Detachment (which replaced de l'Escaille's command in January 1916), and the modest equipment of the French squadron was very striking. Incidentally, the British, unfortunate in their type of engine, flew no farther or no more frequently over enemy territory than their predecessors had done.

and it was poor return to these men for their risk of life and limb, when the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, replacing the Canal Defence, dismissed them with hardly a word of thanks.

The Canal Defence Force reckoned also upon assistance from the Allied Fleets. But, however attractive the idea of protecting the passage of the Canal by stationing in its waters ships of war of powerful armament, the plan was not without defects. The narrowness of the channel obliged these monsters to proceed at reduced rates of speed. Their mobility thus was seriously hampered, and, if the enemy succeeded in concentrating his fire upon a single ship, it was conceivable that a lucky shot might cause the latter to lose control. Once aground it was possible that the vessel would block the Canal to shipping for an indeterminate period, and thereby secure one of the Turkish objectives. The risk was taken, and no mishap occurred. The enemy threw away his opportunity by distributing the heavier artillery all along the front. The employment of ships of war in one of the three lakes was open to less objection, and the big guns of the French cruiser, the *Requin*, stationed in Timsah, undoubtedly played an important share in the repulse of the enemy's attack in the Ismailia sector on the 3rd February 1915.

No sooner had the Indian units taken up their positions than it was apparent that two schools of thought existed among the defenders. While one section advocated pushing out the line into the desert to deprive the enemy of opportunity to block the Canal, and to damage shipping in its waters, a second urged that that policy would rob Egypt of her most formidable bulwark, the waterway itself. There was in fact uncertainty whether the Indian Expeditionary Force was in Egypt to protect the Suez Canal, or whether it was occupying that line to

defend Egypt. In the end, the cautious arguments in favour of a passive defence found favour, and the British Command resolved to hold fast to the banks of the Canal. It is doubtful whether future military historians will confirm the wisdom of the choice. At one period the Imperial General Staff would have combated stoutly the tactics adopted in December 1914.<sup>1</sup> Following the violation of the Palestine-Sinai frontier by the Ottoman Government in 1906, the subject of the defence of the eastern frontier of Egypt had been reconsidered. The Imperial General Staff maintained, correctly as the Turkish attack in 1915 demonstrated, that the Sinai Peninsula formed no impassable obstacle to the march of an invader from Palestine. In the opinion of that authority a raiding party of 5,000 rifles, supported by a stronger force in rear, could be brought without difficulty within striking distance of the Suez Canal. While confessing that the obvious line of defence was the latter, the Imperial General Staff could not agree that this admission involved purely passive resistance. The enemy must be met and defeated in the desert. To present the Turk with complete freedom of action from Syria to the Canal would lead to disaster, and was directly opposed to the sound military principle that the offensive is the soul of defence. Tied to the bank of the Canal, a protecting force deprives itself of a potent weapon, the counter-attack.

The decision reached in December 1914 was influenced by the consideration that the force at the disposal of the Canal Command was insufficient to undertake the dual duty of garrisoning a number of posts advanced into the desert and of holding in rear a line of over a hundred miles in length. On the other

<sup>1</sup> See a War Office Report, Part II, Suez Canal Defence Scheme, published in May 1910.

hand, there was no reason why Territorial units then in Cairo should not have undertaken the second duty, and thereby released the Indian troops for the first. The passive defence of the Canal had two radical defects. Firstly, the plan allowed the enemy to conceal to the last his points of attack: secondly, as a consequence, the selected line had to be held in strength throughout. The command attempted to lessen the last inconvenience by various expedients. Reserves were concentrated on the west bank, facing points which seemed probable Turkish objectives, and, to provide for their rapid transfer to a threatened locality, floating bridges<sup>1</sup> and temporary ferries were placed in position. A second device to reduce the length of line to be held was more ingenious. Large areas on the east bank were flooded, rendering the enemy's advance across them practically impossible. Port Said already was protected in this manner.<sup>2</sup> Under the skilful direction of two irrigation engineers lent by the Egyptian Government, a depression of many square miles in extent, lying to the east of the harbour, had been flooded. So successful was the operation that inundations were begun at many suitable points. Powerful pumping plants, lent by the Canal Company, filled other depressions on the east bank of the Canal.

Meanwhile in Jerusalem the Turkish Commander was pondering over the route which his Expeditionary Corps would take across Sinai. Three roads lay open to his choice: the northern through El Arish to Qantara, the central through Hasana to Ismailia, and the southern through Nekhl to Suez. The choice fell upon the second. Broadly speaking, Sinai may be divided into three zones, Northern, Central, and

<sup>1</sup> At Qantara and Kubri respectively.

<sup>2</sup> The suggestion came from Sir William Willcocks, K.C.M.G., the well-known Anglo-Egyptian irrigation engineer.



Southern. The first is a narrow strip bordered on the north by the sea and on the south by a belt of sand dunes stretching from El Arish to Qantara. At their widest the dunes extend for many miles in a southerly direction. No wheeled transport can move through them, and progress for a man on foot is slow and arduous. The Central Zone is a broad limestone plateau forming a natural escarpment, east to west, across the Peninsula. Rising from the southern extremity of the sand dunes the plateau attains rapidly a height of 3,000 feet above sea-level, and then falls as abruptly, the western edge being terminated by the high ground at Mukhsheib, Yelleg, and Sowa. The most prominent feature of the Southern Zone is the presence of lofty granite mountains, which in the vicinity of Akaba rise as high as 10,000 feet. Of the Peninsula, as a whole, it may be said truly that no area in the world is more bleak or more desolate. The inhabitants are a few Bedouins, nomadic in habit, and unaffected by standards of comfort. In the Northern Zone there are a few oases where date-palms grow and poor crops of barley are raised; but elsewhere there is no vegetation, and little sign of human or animal life. Of the climate no prediction can be made save that snow will not fall. The heat in summer is intense, and in winter bitter winds and sandstorms blow. The Syrian-Turkish soldier hated equally all seasons spent in this inhospitable desert: and the survivors of Djemal's army must have bitter memories of campaigning in Sinai.

Apart from the narrow Northern Zone, recognized wells and watering places in the Peninsula are few and scattered, though their number and available supply of water increase in years when unusually heavy rain falls over the district. Then storms from the Mediterranean sweep across the belt of sand dunes to break upon the Central Plateau, where two great

collecting areas, the Wadi el Arish and the Mukhsheib escarpment, receive the downpour. In a day or two the first becomes a magnificent stream broadening to two miles in width as it enters the sea at El Arish, while the second discharges the flood into a number of small depressions of ground.<sup>1</sup> These conditions, occurring perhaps once in every seven years, actually existed in the winter of 1914-15. The largest of the four rock cisterns at Moiya el Harab<sup>2</sup> was filled in this manner. Any anxiety, therefore, which Djemal may have felt as regards water, when weighing the merits of the central route against the other, should have been dispelled if he were aware of the actual facts.<sup>3</sup> In the Northern Zone rain during the months of winter is always plentiful. Continuous showers blow from seaward and discharge their burden in the belt of land lying between the coastline and the dunes. The moisture is absorbed at once in the soft sand. Yet while there is no difficulty in winter in adding to the number of the recognized wells existing on the El Arish-Qantara road by the simple process of boring fresh outlets, the water obtained usually is so brackish that horses refuse to drink it. The Southern Zone alone has no water facilities. The road traversing the area passes through prolonged stretches of well-less

<sup>1</sup> Thus, at Er Rigum, a few miles east of Lake Timsah, where the Turkish column halted to prepare for the final stage of its march, excellent water was available in January 1915. So large was the supply that some weeks later the British Intelligence Service estimated that the pool still contained 250,000 gallons.

<sup>2</sup> These cisterns (of varying capacity, the largest being 40' by 40' by 25' deep), each holding, when filled, about a quarter of a million gallons, appear to have been excavated originally for the convenience of pilgrims proceeding to Mecca. Since, however, the easier route, via Suez and Jedda, came into fashion, the cisterns no longer needed have fallen into disrepair.

<sup>3</sup> The brief account of the march given by Von Kressenstein suggests that Djemal's personal knowledge of the natural water supplies on the central route was scanty.

desert, where travellers must depend for supplies upon what they carry with them.

There remain for consideration the marching and the tactical values of the three roads. The central undoubtedly had the advantage. Going is good throughout. In place of the soft sand of the sea-shore there is hard limestone giving an excellent surface for men and animals to walk upon. Here and there progression may be delayed by stretches of scattered flints and boulders or of yielding sand: but neither the one nor the other stop the movement of wheeled transport, and the march of infantry units is barely checked. Above all, the central road was secure from attack on the flanks, and, over half its length, from observation from the air. It is possible that the Turkish Staff, in balancing the respective merits and demerits of the two routes, attached too much weight to the first consideration.<sup>1</sup> Warships steaming parallel with the Northern Sinai coast must stand well out to sea in order to keep in deep water. The effect of their fire, directed from long ranges and upon minute targets, could have been safely discounted by the Turkish command, or the danger incurred by the troops eliminated by marching them across the more exposed stretches after nightfall. There was greater substance in the second consideration. Surprise was one of the factors upon which Djemal counted. If his troops could get within striking distance of the point of attack before their march across the desert was known, the Defence might be caught napping. There was no hope of securing this advantage if the Expeditionary Corps marched by the northern road. Each

<sup>1</sup> It is worthy of remark that Von Kressenstein declares that the northern road was rejected as the line of advance on account of the risk of bombardment from the sea. On the other hand, he himself made use of that road on two occasions in the following year: and in describing the campaigns he makes no mention of anxiety felt upon this score.

step of the journey would be duly marked, and reported by the sea-planes operating from Port Said.

To Djemal, clinging still to the dream of entering Cairo at the head of a victorious army, the choice of the central route was correct. The first objective of an invader of Egypt from the east, after crossing the Suez Canal, must be the capture of the Sweetwater Canal at a point behind Ismailia. Once that objective is achieved the road into Egypt lies open to him. Danger from the rear is gone. With the water-supply cut off, the defenders of the Canal must surrender or perish of thirst. To force, then, the passage of the Canal at either of its extremities would place the invader at a disadvantage. If the crossing was made in the northern sector he would have to fight his way along the west bank in unfavourable conditions, on a narrow front and subjected to fire on the flanks. In the southern sector he would be little better off. Further, the operation of bridging the Canal in these localities was peculiarly difficult. The channel is at its widest, and the terrain of the east bank is in favour of the defence. There is little cover which the attackers can utilize, and they are exposed to the heavy guns of warships moored in the Canal. On the other hand, in the central sector there are two places which afford prospect of success: the cutting which carries the Canal through the plateau of El Gisir, immediately north of Ismailia, and the cuttings between Tussum and Serapeum. In neither locality can the defence make effective use of ships of war: and in both the configuration of the east bank gives advantage to the attackers.

While both tactical and supply reasons thus justified the selection of the central road as the main line of advance across Sinai, Von Kressenstein and other Germans must have felt grave doubts of the issue of the adventure. To essay the invasion of a country garrisoned by 50,000 to 60,000 troops, and protected

by so formidable a bulwark as the deep and wide Suez Canal, with a force of less than one-third of that number, unprovided with aircraft, and separated from their base by a hundred miles of barren desert, was a hazardous adventure. It is true that camp gossip declared that the British garrison in Egypt was composed of third-rate troops, who spent the day in kicking footballs: but Von Kressenstein could have given little credence to such idle tales. Still less could he have believed that the Defence would neglect to improve the natural strength of their position. He may have felt more disposed to accept Djemal's conviction that Egypt would rise in revolt when the first Turkish soldier appeared on the Canal, and the fact that the Sheikh El Islam in Constantinople, shortly after the outbreak of war, had called upon all followers of the Prophet to slay the Christian enemies of Turkey presumably was known to him. 'The chief of the believers, the Khalif, invites you all as Muslims, to join in a Holy War,' ran the words of the final paragraph of the proclamation of this religious dignitary.<sup>1</sup> Von Kressenstein, excusably enough, may have attached more importance to the appeal than the document deserved. There were doubtless a number of devout Turks who believed sincerely that the words of the Sheikh El Islam would inflame the hearts of the Egyptian nation; and since Von Kressenstein now lived and worked with men who gloried in the declaration of a Holy War, he may be pardoned if he accepted their views.<sup>2</sup> But Djemal's staff, although aware of Egyptian hostility

<sup>1</sup> *Secrets of the Bosphorus*, by Mr. Morgenthau.

<sup>2</sup> The Ottoman Empire did little to follow up this religious appeal. In a letter published on the 15th December 1922, in the *El Abram*, a leading newspaper of Cairo, by Colonel Tewfiq Fahim, formerly an A.D.C. of the Khedive, the latter says, 'I was in Constantinople as A.D.C. of the ex-Khedive from 1914 to 1919, and as far as I know the Ottoman Government made no statement as regards Egypt, except

towards the British Occupation, exaggerated the strength of Pro-Turkish sentiment in Egypt.<sup>1</sup> In point of fact, no man raised a finger to help the invaders or attempted to embarrass the Defence. Detachments of the Egyptian Army serving on the Canal, and individual Egyptian officers stationed at Tor and other isolated points, remained perfectly loyal to their British commanders.

Between the 19th and 23rd January 1915 the presence on the northern road of patrols of enemy, and at Moiya el Harab and Ain el Sudr, was reported. Bold air reconnaissances made by sea-planes from Port Said disclosed also the concentration of large forces at Bîr Saba, Kossaima, and El Auja. Thus, although authentic information was still lacking, the Defence had reason to believe, contrary to expectation, that the main body of the Turkish Army would advance through the Central Zone, and reports from intelligence agents at El Arish tended to confirm the view that units sent along the Mediterranean shore route were intended to distract the attention of the Defence from the main line of advance. The first exchange of shots between the contending troops took place on the 26th January, when a patrol opened fire upon the British picket line at Qantara. A similar affair occurred at El Kubri. Presumably these feints were intended to entice the Defence into reinforcing the

a proclamation which was issued in the middle of 1915, by Sultan Muhamed V, addressed to his "dear children", the inhabitants of Egypt, stating that his forces were proceeding to the Nile Valley, in order to expel the Occupationists who trespassed on its freedom. The proclamation also stated that all privileges granted to the Egyptians by his predecessors, the Great Sultans, would remain unchanged, and be respected in the present and in the future.'

<sup>1</sup> His Majesty's Government had a clearer conception of the facts. Shortly after the outbreak of war the Imams in Egyptian mosques were instructed to make no mention of the Khalif's name in the public prayers recited on Fridays. Blessings were invoked instead upon 'The Khalif of the Muslims' and upon the Sovereign of Egypt.

northern and southern sectors. The British Command was not deceived by the stratagem. The following day the ships of war detailed to assist the Defence steamed to their allotted stations; <sup>1</sup> the Canal Company evacuated the administrative personnel from the banks of the Canal, and withdrew craft and plant to Port Said; and maritime traffic through the Canal was stopped. Desultory firing upon the Defence troops at Qantara and El Kubri was continued throughout the ensuing forty-eight hours; but on the 29th the situation became clear. Recognizing that the main attack would be delivered at some point in the neighbourhood of Ismailia, the Defence reinforced the centre sector. The next two days passed without incident. The enemy crept up undisturbed to within a few miles of the Canal, and on the morning of the 31st his scouts were detected on the high ground to the east of the Tussum-Serapeum sector. Meantime the Turkish column demonstrating before Qantara was moving rapidly to the south, and after an uninspiring attack upon Ferdan joined the main body concentrated to the south-east of Ismailia. On the same day the Defence located the enemy's strength and positions as follows: At Qatiya (thirty miles east of Port Said) 2,000 rifles, machine-guns, and light desert artillery, at Bir El Mahada (twelve miles NE. of Ferdan) 7,000 rifles and one mountain battery, and between Moiya el Harab (twenty-five miles ESE. of Tussum) and Kataib El Kheil (twelve miles ENE. of Tussum) 8,000 rifles and two heavy guns 6 in. in calibre. In rear of the last party were estimated reserves of 4,000 rifles and some mountain guns.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Of British ships the *Swiftsure* was at Qantara, the *Clio* at Ferdan, the *Ocean* at El Shatt, the *Himalaya* at Geneffe, the *Minerva* at Shallufa, and the *Proserpine* at Port Said. Of French ships, the *D'Entrecasteaux* was in the Great Bitter Lake and the *Requin* in Lake Timsah.

<sup>2</sup> Colonel Ali Bey Fuad, the Senior Staff Officer of the 10th Division

The Turkish Command did not march their men

of the Fourth Army Corps, has published (in Turkish and in Arabic) an interesting account of the campaign. His book, *The Egyptian Expedition: or, From Paris to the Desert*, gives many details of the organization of the Turkish Expeditionary Corps. The author, who had already won distinction in the Balkans and Tripoli at the outbreak of the European War, was military attaché to the Turkish Embassy in Paris.

He places the respective strength of the three columns of the Expeditionary Corps as follows :

Northern.	33 officers. 1,386 rifles. 55 mounted troops. 43 camels—1st line transport.
Central.	371 officers. 11,146 rifles. 811 mounted troops. 1,444 camels—1st line transport. 81 riding camels.
Southern.	32 officers. 1,386 rifles. 887 cavalry. 1,534 camels—1st line transport.

Distributed among the three columns were the following artillery units: 1 heavy-gun battery; 1 desert-gun battery, 5 mountain batteries, and 3 machine-gun companies.

One part of the book is devoted to an excellent description of the animal transport. The Supply Train was organized into *Zumras* or sections: 128 camels to a Supply *Zumra*, and 92 to a Water *Zumra*. Sixty *Zumras* were allotted to the Central Column; 10 to each of the other two. Of the *Zumras* attached to the first, 10 carried supplies, and 50 water. Each Supply *Zumra* was loaded with 170 sacks of barley, 156 sacks of biscuit, and 22 sacks of dates. In addition to the Supply and Water *Zumras*, there were also 11 sections, each of 87 camels, to carry ammunition. All artillery units were provided with 600 rounds per gun: one camel load being 4 heavy shells, 16 desert-gun shells, 52 mountain-gun shells, or 4 boxes of small-arm ammunition.

Djemal Pasha himself describes the formation of the Turkish Expeditionary Corps as follows:

1st Echelon:

25th Division: One composite regiment drawn from the units of the 23rd and 27th Divisions; 5 field batteries; 1 15-cm. howitzer battery; 1 cavalry regiment; 4 companies of camel corps; 1,500



upon empty stomachs. Along the central route a chain of supply dépôts had been established as far as the limited transport allowed. At one dépôt it is said that the supplies consisted of 105 tons of biscuits, 24 of dates, and 4 of olives. But the Turkish daily ration during the march, of 600 grammes of biscuit, 150 grammes of dates, and 9 grammes of tea, would be meagre fare for European troops, nor would an officer accustomed to more luxurious accommodation than the Turk appreciate a baggage allowance of only 5 kilogrammes. No tents were taken on the march, and all ranks slept under the stars. March discipline was easy, and the columns were not pressed. Desertion probably was fairly frequent, since the troops were warned, time and again, that the penalty of that crime was death. Strangely enough, the Expeditionary Corps appears to have suffered less from thirst than from cold. So uncomfortable were the nights from this cause that the troops were unable to sleep: and the column rested by day and marched at night. Altogether, the Turkish Staff deserve congratulation for the measures which they took to husband the strength of the troops. An undated letter found upon the body of a Turkish soldier, killed before Tussum, is testimony of their care. 'By the grace of the Highest,' the writer begins, 'we have reached the Canal in perfect health. If I were to say that we had endured no fatigue I should be lying. A march across a vast desert evidently must be difficult. But thanks to our

mounted Arab volunteers; 6 engineer companies; 1 field telegraph section; and 1 field hospital. Total strength: 16,642 men, 968 horses, 2,000 camels, and 328 oxen.

#### 2nd Echelon:

10th Infantry Division with divisional artillery; and one squadron of cavalry.

1st Echelon began the march on the Canal on the 14th January. Army Head-quarters and 2nd Echelon followed a day later.

arrangement and preparations the greatest part of our troubles has been overcome. Had we not made sure of our supply of provisions and water the march might have had a sorry ending. Those who said that everything was perfectly prepared did not exaggerate.<sup>1</sup>

An elaborate analysis of the fighting on the 3rd and 4th February 1915 in front of the Tussum-Serapeum sector of the Defence is outside the scope of this book. A few words, therefore, must suffice to describe the action.<sup>2</sup> In the early hours of the morning of the 3rd February Turkish storming parties, a bridging unit, and a party of sappers, under cover of darkness crept up to a point immediately south of the Canal station of Tussum. The crest of the east bank here commands the other, while to the north and south of the point of the column's objective low sandhills alternate with shallow depressions, which slope gently to the water's edge. Aided by the folds of the ground, the sappers without difficulty launched the pontoons and rafts transported from Constantinople to the Canal.<sup>3</sup> The infantry then embarked in these frail craft and proceeded to ferry themselves across. But the Defence on the west bank were not asleep. The alarm was given, and a furious fire directed upon the enemy. When daylight was sufficiently advanced to appreciate the situation, it was seen that the storm troops had failed to execute their mission. One pontoon or two had reached the west bank: but their passengers scrambling ashore to effect a lodgement were cut down or made prisoners.

<sup>1</sup> Intelligence Report dated 15th February 1915.

<sup>2</sup> Excellent accounts of the fighting are given in *The Times History of the War*, and also in *L'Attaque du Canal de Suez*, by Lieutenant de Vaisseau Georges Doui.

<sup>3</sup> In all there were 20 pontoons and 6 rafts. The pontoons were of galvanized iron, 16' to 22' in length, and 4½' in width. The rafts were improvised constructions of empty petroleum tins, stoutly lashed to wooden frameworks.

The remaining pontoons and the rafts had been sunk in midstream. The Turkish Command at once set the troops in motion for the second phase of the engagement. Holding the 10th Division in reserve, and directing the 23rd to distract attention from the real objective by making a feint farther north, it sent forward the 25th to attack the Tussum-Serapeum line. The 23rd Division got to work at once, and its well-directed artillery fire reached the outskirts of Ismailia. The unarmoured ship H.M.S. *Hardinge* was fairly caught. Hit by more than one shell she was obliged finally to slip moorings and take refuge in Lake Timsah. The French cruiser, the *Requin*, became next the target of the enemy. Fortunately her commander was able within a short time to locate the battery and eventually to silence it. Meanwhile the enemy had brought up fresh troops to attack Serapeum. The effort to dislodge the defenders of that sector failed, and the Indian garrison, being reinforced, counter-attacked in turn. In the withdrawal the Turks were caught by cross fire from the two French ships, the *Requin* and the *D'Entrecasteaux*. The confusion was increased by the inclement weather. A severe sand-storm raged throughout the day, blotting all objects from view. Units of the enemy advancing across the desert could not keep touch or direction; and perceiving the uselessness of further operations in these conditions Djemal ordered a general retirement. The movement was conducted skilfully, and no more than seven officers and 280 other ranks remained as prisoners of war in the hands of the Defence. While the main body was attempting to force the passage of the Canal at Serapeum and Tussum, small parties of the Expeditionary Corps demonstrated continuously in front of Qantara and Ferdan, in the hope that the commanders of the two posts would appeal for reinforcements, and thus weaken the centre. But the

Defence did not fall into the trap. The local garrisons had no difficulty in keeping the enemy at a safe distance from the Canal; and although various buildings at Ferdan were hit by shell, and H.M.S. *Clio* became the target of a battery of artillery, the Turkish objective in the northern sector was not secured. South of Serapeum quiet reigned throughout the day.

The Canal Defence anticipated a renewal of the assault on the following morning. During the night of the 3rd fresh troops from Cairo were hurried to Ismailia, and H.M.S. *Swiftsure*, flying the flag of the Vice-Admiral in command of Egyptian waters, took up her station in Lake Timsah. But following the retirement the Turkish Command had conferred anxiously. The 10th Division was still fresh; but the inability of the storming parties during the preceding twelve hours to make any impression upon the strongly entrenched defenders, and the impossibility of improvising fresh bridging material in place of the pontoons and rafts sunk, did not encourage the resumption of the offensive. The spirit of the troops also had been shaken by their failure and by the casualties which they had suffered. The Command decided therefore to break touch and to retreat to Bir Saba. There is some reason to suppose that uncertainty of the temper of the Arab units was responsible partly for the decision. It would not be strange, as a result of the failure to break through the defence, if racial jealousy and antipathy had become emphasized. In his account of the campaign Von Kressenstein passes lightly over the point. He agreed with the decision to withdraw upon the definite ground that fresh attack on the following day, if unsuccessful, would lead to the annihilation of the Expeditionary Corps, and thereby arrest future operations against the Canal. On the other hand, he was

convinced that the Turkish defeat was due to the terrible weather conditions and not to the strength or the skill of the defenders. Reviewing the operations, Von Kressenstein reached the conclusion that their results had been worth the risk which the experiment entailed. In his opinion the losses incurred in the campaign<sup>1</sup> were more than justified by the experience gained of desert warfare. Above all, he believed that Great Britain, alarmed by the ease with which the enemy had crossed Sinai, would take steps to reinforce the Army in Egypt.

For the first forty-eight hours of the retreat the Turks marched almost without a pause; but, once assured that they were not followed, the troops took matters more easily. But the supply organization, especially that of water, appears to have broken down sadly, and the retiring column on the return journey suffered continually from thirst. Presumably the infantry outmarched the camel transport, and the pace maintained was too fast and the halts too short for the latter. An eyewitness states that the camels died in prodigious numbers.<sup>2</sup> Short of water and short of food, it was a draggle-tailed army which reached Bir Saba. Djemal was hard put to it to find a respectable excuse for the failure of the campaign, and the

<sup>1</sup> Von Kressenstein states that the Turkish losses were as follows :

14	officers killed.
15	„ wounded.
15	„ missing.
128	other ranks, killed or died from wounds.
366	„ wounded.
712	„ missing.

The casualties suffered by the defenders were insignificant.

<sup>2</sup> Colonel Ali Fuad Bey estimates that 7,000 camels died or were lost in the course of the retreat: nearly 50 per cent. of the number of animals which started with the expedition. Von Kressenstein is silent upon the point of transport losses: in contrast to his earlier boastful assertions that the Corps reached the Canal without the loss of a man or an animal.

proclamation which he addressed to the inhabitants of Syria and Palestine on the subject was an ingenious combination of truth and falsehood. 'Our troops', he declared, 'reached the Canal. They did not cross it, nor enter Egypt: for Egypt belongs to Mohammedans and it would be unfair to take that country by force.' At that point evidently he felt doubt whether the explanation would satisfy even the credulous Turk; for he continued with greater accuracy, 'Also we had not enough men and animals.'

It is pertinent to ask why the Defence did not pursue, or at least resolutely counter-attack over the whole line, when the enemy broke off the engagement on the afternoon of the 3rd February. The explanation offered, that British Head-quarters were beguiled into a belief that the Turks had large reserves in rear, is not very convincing. Air reports did not confirm the stories of agents and deserters. Still it may be said that the statements of the latter fitted in with the natural impression that an enemy, who in spite of great physical difficulties had succeeded in crossing the Sinai desert, would not lack the spirit to deliver a second attack. The Turkish withdrawal from the battle-field then was assumed to be either a measure to gain time to form up fresh storming parties, or a ruse to lure the defenders into the desert, where they would sacrifice the advantages of an entrenched position. Influenced by these considerations the Defence Command directed the troops to hold fast in their positions on the banks of the Canal, and not until the morning of the 4th did the Mounted Brigade cross the Canal to discover the enemy's dispositions. There is but one hypothesis which explains the inaction. The Command had been so engrossed with a passive defence that they had forgotten to prepare for the contingency of the rout of the enemy. But there had been ample time to collect camels and

personnel, and to organize a pursuing force complete with field transport. The defenders had not done so, and the Turkish Army profited by their neglect.

On the 5th February, air reports disclosed the melancholy news that the Turkish Expeditionary Corps was well on their way back to Bir Saba. Thus ingloriously ended the projected invasion of Egypt. Djemal Pasha had won neither strategical nor tactical success. The British line was intact: the Canal had suffered no damage: and the Egyptian population were unmoved. The campaign had merely demonstrated once more that an army can cross the Sinai desert without difficulty. So little effect had the attack produced that navigation through the Canal was interrupted only for a brief period. On the afternoon of the 5th ships were making the passage as in peace time. It is strange that the Turkish commander, at the last moment, was not persuaded to sacrifice his dream of conquering Egypt in favour of a more modest ambition. To block the Suez Canal may have been within the powers of his force; to enter Cairo was quite beyond them. A leader less vain and impetuous than Djemal would have appreciated his limitations, when, following many weeks of strenuous exertion, he could collect at the advanced base no more than 20,000 rifles. No doubt he trusted also to other weapons: surprise, and some assistance from Egyptians. But no prudent commander would have placed much reliance upon such adventitious factors, and Djemal was ill advised to do so.

But there is some reason to believe that Djemal had received encouragement from Berlin. While military opinion had declared against the adventure, and General Liman von Sanders in Constantinople had made no secret of his belief that an advance upon Egypt with inadequate forces was courting disaster, other German influences had been at work. There

were politicians in Berlin who thought that even a partial success on the Suez Canal would be worth the sacrifice of the lives of a few thousand Turkish soldiers. If Djemal did not take exactly that view, the gossip current in the Syrian-Palestine Command was at fault. Turkish officers believed that the German diplomatic representative in Constantinople had suggested privately to their Commander-in-Chief that the capture of Ismailia would be a charming New Year's gift to the Kaiser. No one is quicker than a Turk to take a hint from exalted quarters, and no one was more alive to his future interests than Djemal. Good fortune alone saved the expedition from complete disaster.



## VII

### THE SUEZ CANAL ZONE IN 1915

CONTRARY to expectation, Egyptians displayed no more than lukewarm interest in the items of news concerning the concentration of Turkish Military Forces in Southern Palestine, which from day to day trickled through the fingers of the Censorship. Even the definite announcement that an Expeditionary Corps had left Bir Saba to march against the Suez Canal caused curiously little public comment. Such discussion as there was indicated among Egyptians the birth of a new feeling, as unexpected as it was welcome to Englishmen. Irritation was openly expressed that Turkey, a professed friend of Egypt, actually was proposing to turn the peaceful territory of the latter into a battle-field. There arose a disposition to regard the invader from a fresh point of view. As the deliverer of a nation enslaved by England he was welcome: as a violator of Egyptian soil he sank in public estimation. Egyptians began to ask one another at this point whether the presence of a powerful Turkish Army in Cairo would not be almost as intolerable a nuisance as that of a British. In short, the desire once felt in Egypt for the success of Ottoman arms was vanishing. No one of the population was prepared to suffer the horrors of war merely to exchange one military domination for another. Quite characteristically, the Ottoman Government took no pains to combat the impression. It is true that their potential activity in Egypt was now much restricted. Egyptians from whom Constantinople would have expected to receive assistance were interned, and others, either from fear of martial law or from doubt

of Turkish good faith, had not come forward to take their place. Yet every channel of communication was by no means closed, and, had the Ottoman Government exercised intelligent ingenuity, it should not have been beyond their power to inform Egypt that the Turkish Army was coming to Cairo to free her from servitude. They never did so. Either from stupidity or from carelessness, the Ottoman Government had not taken the trouble to understand the true nature of Egyptian sentiment. They started the war with the complacent belief that hostility in Egypt towards Great Britain sprang from a profound affection for Turkey. Never was an impression more inaccurate. It was based upon vague assurances from Sheikh Shawish Abdel Aziz and other political refugees from Egypt, all equally irresponsible and untrustworthy advisers, that their countrymen, burning to throw off the yoke of the Christian oppressors, only awaited a signal from Turkey to rise in revolt. Also it is certain that Constantinople completely miscalculated the effect which the dispatch of an armed force into Egyptian territory would produce upon the national spirit of the invaded country. They hoped that its advance would increase in Cairo and elsewhere the number of sympathizers with Ottoman aims. Actually the reverse was the case. Apart from these misconceptions, the Turk possesses neither aptitude nor taste for propaganda. No people should practise that double-edged weapon unless they have a definite objective and are prepared to give formal guarantees. Since Turks can neither formulate a policy nor keep a promise, propaganda is not for them.

If proof is required of Egyptian apathy towards the invader, the behaviour of the native population at Port Said, a notorious stronghold of fanaticism, in the closing days of January 1915 will supply it. There

was in the town no vestige of excitement and no trace of sympathy for the Turks. It cannot be said that the people were overawed by the strength of the local garrison: for the latter had melted away to one weak battalion. Since this attenuated force could watch only a few points in the sector, there was ample opportunity for Egyptians, well disposed to the enemy, to commit acts of sabotage. None occurred. It would be difficult to suggest a more striking testimony of his incapacity to make modern war than the fact that the Turk never troubled to enlist the help of Egyptians in the Canal Zone. The neglect is inexplicable. A few incendiary fires at Port Said would have forced the Defence Command to reinforce the local garrison at the expense of more exposed sectors on the Canal, precisely at the moment when the enemy desired to weaken the latter. It was not as if insuperable difficulties existed in entering and leaving the Canal Zone at that period. Passengers were embarking and disembarking almost daily with little hindrance to their movements: travellers were coming and going in and out of Port Said with equal liberty. Enemy agents, veiling their identities, could have gone about their business without fear of detection for awhile. In the town there must have existed some human material for these agents to influence: material which required only guidance and money to set in motion. But from first to last no attempt was made to embarrass the Defence from within.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is singular that neither Germans nor Turks throughout the War sought seriously to establish in Egypt a service of Intelligence Agents, or to obtain first-hand news of British dispositions. What information passed into the hands of the enemy was garbled and distorted. No doubt in 1914 and 1915, when neutral ships were regularly making the passage of the Canal, reports of the numbers and positions of the defenders as observed from the deck of a steamer were transmitted faithfully to Berlin. But during that period there was one authenticated instance only when an enemy subject, travelling

The call of Islam, sounded in Constantinople, produced no response from the population of Egypt. A few Egyptian coastguards temporarily serving on the Canal, and at a later period the garrison of a post in the Western Desert, passed over to the enemy; but civilian guards elsewhere and officers and men of the Egyptian Army remained absolutely staunch.<sup>1</sup> What echo there was to the call came from a few Indian Mohammedans serving in the units of the Canal Defence Force. Only one or two battalions were affected: a fact which suggested either that some unknown and powerful influence was at work in the ranks, or that the discipline of the units was at fault. The earlier deserters got safely away with their arms and ammunition. Subsequently a party was caught, in disguise, deliberately slipped over the ship's side in order carefully to examine the dispositions of the Defence. The latter would have known nothing of the incident had not the master of the neutral vessel reported the disappearance of his passenger a few minutes before he sailed from Port Said. A good many hours had elapsed before the German was caught, entangled in the inundation to the east of Port Said. The man had made his way from Ismailia to that point, and was then striving to strike eastwards to join the Turks.

<sup>1</sup> The story of the defence, in the month of February 1915, of Tor, an Egyptian quarantine station at the southerly extremity of the Sinai Peninsula, and of Abu Zeneina, a mining district in the same area, illustrates the truth of this assertion. It was part of the Turkish plan to persuade the Canal Defence to dissipate its troops; and with this view Von Kressenstein detached a German officer with some Bedouin levies to raid Tor and Abu Zeneina. Both places were hastily garrisoned by a detachment of 200 rifles of the Egyptian Army. Kondos, the leader of the expedition, after an arduous march over the waterless desert, got within striking distance of Tor. There, for some unknown reason, he halted. Possibly he doubted the fighting quality of his Bedouin force, or more probably he expected the Egyptian troops to desert. He was entirely disappointed in that hope. Far from showing any desire to join the Turks, the detachment defying the enemy put the quarantine station in a creditable state of defence. At this point a spirited sally would have put the Bedouins to rout. But the commander of the Egyptian troops preferred to await reinforcements. On the arrival at Tor of 300 Gurkhas the enemy was attacked and driven away.

and the deserters summarily shot. The contagion was stopped from that moment: a noteworthy instance of the value of capital punishment in the field. It must be confessed, also, that visits paid at this juncture by various ruling Princes and other dignitaries of India to the Canal made a marked impression upon the troops. The presence in Egypt of leaders of Muslim thought provoked the suggestion that Turkey had no monopoly of Islam. Their unaffected demeanour, their obvious anxiety to please, and their invariable courtesy of manner, captivated all who came into contact with them. Perhaps the Prince most constant to Egypt during the War was His Highness the Maharajah of Bikanir. He was exceedingly proud of his own contingent, a Camel Corps serving on the Canal, and with excellent reason. The Maharajah of Pattiala was a second, more restrained in manner than the other, but equally attractive in personality. There were others, also, in their company, from war-scarred veterans to boy Rajahs,<sup>1</sup> all animated with the same confidence in the

<sup>1</sup> Among the many pleasant memories which are preserved of officers and soldiers serving on the Canal during the War is that of a youthful Rajah, heir to an obscure and petty state. A pathetic little figure, no more than 19 years of age, he reported himself at Port Said Head-quarters a few days after the date of the Armistice. For three long years he had been petitioning Simla to permit him to proceed to France. Always there was to his prayer the monotonous answer, 'Wait: you are too young.' At last even Simla was moved by his entreaties and, relenting, bade the boy go. Commissioned as a subaltern of the Royal Field Artillery he worried the Bombay embarkation staff until he was put on board the first transport sailing from that port. At Suez his hopes were dashed to the ground; for, transshipping there, he learnt of the Armistice. Reaching Port Said, he passed into the Transit Camp, where he found few to sympathize with his disappointment. "After four years of the exhausting and dangerous business of war, the older men had forgotten their own early enthusiasm. Since he could see no fighting the young Indian's ambition now was to take part in the triumphal entry of the victors into Germany: and when it was pointed out that in no circumstances

ultimate triumph of British arms, and all imbued with the same spirit of good-fellowship. Unless the Princes wore masks to conceal their real thoughts, what Englishmen serving on the Canal could doubt Indian loyalty to the Empire?

If the abrupt transition of Egypt into an area of hostilities hardly affected the attitude of Egyptians towards the War, the change produced an immediate effect upon the British section of the community. Hitherto, it seemed as if Englishmen and women in Egypt would have no personal knowledge of the fighting. Some of their fellow countrymen disappeared to join the military forces, but the majority were going about their business as usual. It was no lack of patriotism which caused the air of indifference. Once it was known that Turkey meditated attack upon Egypt, head-quarters in Cairo were overwhelmed with offers of assistance from the public. The pity was that neither the men nor the women who came forward in so spirited a manner had been trained in any branch of war. General Maxwell was forced to reply to one lady, more pertinacious than the others, 'Every one expects me to find him or her suitable military work, and no one seems to have any qualifications. I want dispatch riders. Can you ride a motor bicycle?' In 1914 that accomplishment among women was rare, and the visitor had to confess her incapacity. The rebuke was significant. Many people in Egypt, as elsewhere in those days, no doubt

could he reach Europe in time to take part in that ceremony, he declared that he would be satisfied by getting to Cologne. Never was there a more desperate young fire-eater. Alas, earnest representations made to G.H.Q. for a privileged passage met with no favour. 'Q.' in those days had other matters to examine than naïve requests of this nature. In despair the boy was about to return to India when the Commandant of the Transit Camp was persuaded to smuggle the little Rajah, out of his turn, into an early batch of departures. It was an indiscretion: but surely for once the end justified the means.

required a sharp reminder that war is a serious business ; the pursuit of experts, not of amateurs. But later a truer conception was formed. Knowledge is knowledge wherever it may have been acquired, and a nation engaged in a struggle for life and death has need of all her sons and daughters.

English women in Egypt, although temporarily discouraged, took to heart the admonition. The upshot of their discussion was the formation of a body of voluntary workers. Among the volunteers were women of all ages and all stations in life. Although each was inspired with the spirit of self-sacrifice, few of their number were yet qualified to help in hospitals. First Aid treatment to the wounded then was almost as mysterious a subject to the women as warfare was to the men. But there was still time to remedy the defect. Instructional classes were formed in Cairo and elsewhere to teach the art of bandaging and the elements of First Aid ; and within a few weeks there were plenty of women in Egypt who had become fairly proficient in the work. At the same moment the leaders were seeking to gain recognition of their existence from the Red Cross Society at home. Unhappily that society had not yet envisaged an extension of its activities beyond France : much less had it foreseen that presently the Army medical authorities would be calling for thousands of women to help the professional nursing staff. London, therefore, merely counselled the applicants to form in Egypt their own Red Cross and affiliate to the body all voluntary organizations. But the task was beyond the capacity of the women, and their husbands and brothers would not help. The reluctance of the men was intelligible. Concentration, not dissipation of energy and money, they declared was the pressing need of the hour, and they were averse to frittering away either in Egypt. Repulsed in this quarter, the

women turned for sympathy and help to the medical officers of the Head-quarters Staff. They received little response to their appeal. The medical service had enough to do at that moment with expanding their own organization to provide for the large number of troops in Egypt. It could spare neither time nor attention to watch over civilian activities. Others less determined would have given up the struggle at this stage, but the women of Cairo and Alexandria were made of stouter stuff. In spite of successive discouragement and absence of official recognition, they formed their own Voluntary Aid Detachments.

The instinct of the women was sounder than that of the men. Within a few months Egypt became one gigantic hospital for the reception of the sick and wounded off Gallipoli. Hurriedly then a Red Cross branch was formed, with the usual defects common to every improvisation. Had the voices of women prevailed, a skeleton organization would have been in force many months before, and many mistakes avoided. In those painful days the Voluntary Aid Detachments of Cairo, Alexandria, and Port Said proved their value a thousandfold. Their programme was modest, and if self-effacement is as great a virtue in war as in peace, assuredly the V.A.D.'s of Egypt earned merit. They rarely spoke of their work, they never grumbled at their duties. Of the many singular phenomena witnessed during the War one of the strangest was the spectacle of gently nurtured women making beds, and serving in overheated canteens, without a murmur of discontent, without a symptom of fatigue. The more menial the task the more light-heartedly some of these gallant spirits approached it. There were men in Cairo who declared that the enthusiasm of the V.A.D.'s would wane when the novelty of the occupation had passed. The cynics were wrong. Through the intense heat of the summer



of 1915 Englishwomen stuck to their self-imposed duties as tenaciously as their men folk in Flanders and on Gallipoli were clinging to the trenches.

The men were slower than their womenkind to take the initiative. After the disciplined manner of the sex they would not move without a signal from authority. Yet to some of the community there was something almost indecent in Englishmen of military age hurrying daily to a club to play purposeless games when their country was engaged in a death struggle. They would not blame the individual whose attitude towards the War after all was governed by his employers, nor even would they censure the insistence of one or two senior officials of the Egyptian Government that all remaining Englishmen were indispensable to the conduct of the business of the State. But many members of the Civil Service, accepting the situation as it was, were not prepared also to agree that Englishmen in Egypt were at liberty therefore to behave as if no war in Europe was raging. In their judgement it was an imperative duty on the part of the entire British community to lay aside childish occupations and to devote the hours of leisure to more serious business. The same problem on the outbreak of war had confronted thoughtful minds at home, and His Majesty's Government had solved it, and a second incidental to war, in one ingenious expedient. A substantial proportion of the rank and file of city and county constabularies were ex-soldiers still under Army Reserve engagements. These men had been recalled to the Colours at once ; and their defection left the police forces of Great Britain sadly undermanned. On the other hand, there were a number of civilians unable, from business and other reasons, to join the new armies, yet laudably anxious to serve the State in any humble capacity. By the establishment of the Special Constabulary

Force, His Majesty's Government killed both birds with one stone. The new force supplied the reinforcement required by the police, while simultaneously it offered war employment to patriotic older men.

But Egyptian conditions were not analogous, and the local problem could not be solved in such simple fashion. Special constables, in fact, were unneeded in Cairo and in Alexandria. In those cities the Egyptian Police were perfectly competent to deal with spasmodic disorder, and the introduction of a body of special constables into the force would have created friction and confusion. Moreover, there were no Englishmen serving in the lower ranks who were subject to recall to the Army, and of those who occupied more responsible positions some had departed already, while others were beyond military age, or really indispensable. The British community, therefore, fell back upon the plan of raising a military unit among their members. The idea was well worth encouragement, and it was a keen disappointment to the organizers that the movement received less support than they had hoped. It was not the fault of the Army that Egypt's reserve of small arms was insufficient to issue rifles to the volunteers: nor can General Maxwell be blamed if he waited to see whether the early enthusiasm would survive the preliminary drudgery of the barrack square. Still it was depressing to drill day after day without prospect of obtaining arms and equipment, and the fact, no doubt, prevented recruits from joining the new unit. Certainly the appeal of the leaders to the British community produced a less hearty response than they had anticipated. Some of the higher-placed officials of the Civil Service thought discipline and drill to be below their dignity: others, afraid of ridicule, would not face in middle age the peremptory commands of the drill sergeant. Every willing volunteer does not

make an ideal soldier, and the military value of the local unit was not very great. Yet when the ledger wherein is inscribed the part played by each Englishman during the Great War comes to be balanced, there will be no entry on the credit side to those in Cairo who stood and jeered while their more spirited colleagues strove to act. 'Willing to wound, yet afraid to strike,' would be a fitting epitaph for the first: for there was more than a spice of malice in the nickname of 'Pharaoh's Foot', which was quickly given to these companies of volunteers. But the leaders refused to be discouraged, and throughout 1915 drilled and marched their men unmercifully, until at the close of that year Egypt became an armed camp, and volunteers were superfluous. Thus the military capacity and courage of the unit was never tested: but had circumstances decreed that they should be, Pharaoh's Foot assuredly would have faced the enemy with resolution. Both officers and men had the right spirit.

More than one senior officer passing through the Suez Canal in the late autumn of 1914 had been struck by the number of young Englishmen employed in shipping business, who seemed almost unconscious of the fact that Great Britain was engaged in a world war. There, as in Cairo, these lads were awaiting a lead from authority. It is usually unwise to offer advice to employers upon the conduct of their business; but in Port Said, at least, it was clear that some one must do so. The situation justified interference: for, unless outward appearances were deceitful, the volume of shipping and coaling work transacted in that port had fallen sadly away since the outbreak of war. If this was so, then it could be no hardship to invite older men in the counting houses to take upon their shoulders greater responsibility and thus free the juniors for military service.

The French shipping agencies had already paid their tribute to the State. There was no one of them which had not surrendered a goodly proportion of their personnel to the battle front. If Frenchmen could continue to transact business with reduced staff, it was reasonable that their British competitors also should be able to do so. There were perhaps eighty to ninety Englishmen of military age employed in one capacity or another in Port Said, and of their number it was estimated that one-third might be well spared by the employers. This suggestion was put to the latter, and patriotically received. They had no immediate reason to regret their generosity. Except for spasmodic movements of transports, the commercial business of the port continued to dwindle. Later the pinch of diminished staff was sorely felt; but by then the number of Englishmen in business had been still further depleted by the call of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force for commissioned officers in the Auxiliary Corps.

So far no section of the civilian population of the Suez Canal Zone had experienced interference in their occupations. Each individual conducted his own affairs as he thought fit: and no step yet had been taken to remind him that the zone was a war area. Thus the news that military authority was about to control the passage of commercial shipping through the Canal fell almost as a shock upon Port Said. First, navigation through the Canal after dark was stopped: then no ship was permitted to enter unless the master was furnished with a military permit: and lastly, the bridge and other exposed parts had to be protected adequately by sandbags. People connected with shipping business did not altogether approve of these measures. They thought them premature, and objected to the delay which was caused. Further, they contended that it was the business of the military

to keep the Turks at a safe distance from the Canal. Some of the protests could hardly have been seriously made, and those who made them looked foolish in the course of the next few days. A passing vessel was peppered unmercifully by enemy rifle fire from the bank, and had not the bridge been screened by a rampart of sandbags the occupants would have been killed outright. The incident showed how wise the Defence had been to force protection upon commercial shipping. It was absurd to take risks. If a pilot was disabled, inevitably his charge would run aground and block the channel for an indefinite period. Encouraged by this success, both before and after the attack on the Canal, the Turks grew adept in stealing down to the water's edge and sniping at passing shipping.

The Defence could not be expected to keep every scout away from the Canal. Since the repulse of the Turkish forces on the 3rd February, British dispositions had undergone no change, and the tendency to concentrate troops in sectors which appeared to be more exposed to attack than others had increased. It was a simple matter in these conditions for two or three adventurous Turks to evade the vigilance of patrols, now reduced in number and strength. Nothing, in fact, short of posting a chain of sentries, extending from one extremity of the Canal to the other, would prevent this manœuvre of the enemy. But to maintain day and night such a line was beyond the power of the Defence, unless it sacrificed all other considerations to the object. That sacrifice the Command declined to make; the more so since in its judgement the proper method of meeting the sniping danger was to provide adequate protection to the pilot and the officers of shipping passing through the Canal. There is reason to believe that the Company did not share the military view: and the difference of opinion was

accentuated when the enemy proceeded to mine the Channel. But there can be no doubt that the Defence adopted the correct attitude in the circumstances. To dissipate the troops at its disposal by furnishing a weak line of sentries over 100 miles in length would have been an act of incomparable folly. Von Kressenstein was too acute a foe to present with chances. He would have struck swiftly at the garrison of some post weakened by the duty thrust newly upon it.

Although unsuccessful in producing the desired result, the sea mines laid in the Canal by the Turks in the spring of 1915 caused infinite annoyance to the Defence. Fortunately for the latter, the number of mines actually at the disposal of the Sinai front was accurately known in Egypt, and the troops on the Canal breathed more freely when the enemy had exhausted the supply. More fortunately still, the Turkish General Staff failed to make the best use of the new weapon. Constantinople could spare to the Syrian-Palestine Command no more than twenty mines, and in place of laying all in the Suez Canal the enemy frittered away a large proportion in floating them in unfrequented seas, such as the Gulf of Akaba, where traffic was confined to the occasional cruise of an Allied warship. With so few mines at their disposal the Turks were ill-advised to scatter them. In the Gulf of Akaba the mines were quite wasted. There may have been more sense in floating a number in the Gulf of Suez, provided the operation was undertaken in areas likely to be traversed by big ships; but either from lack of imagination or from carelessness on the part of the layers this precaution was neglected. The mines were placed in the water within a short distance of a shore from which prudent mariners keep well away at all seasons of the year, and it is hardly necessary in these circumstances to record that no vessel was struck. At least half a

dozen were picked up in a bunch, all grounded on a little rocky islet close to the south-west extremity of the Sinai Peninsula: a fact which suggests that the layers were so negligent, or so hurried, that they did not trouble even to scatter them.

Presumably the diversion of part of the mines from their proper objective, the Suez Canal, was due to the difficulty of transporting all their number across Palestine and Sinai. It is certainly no simple matter to convey by cart and camel over 200 miles of roadless country engines of delicate mechanism, but the feat was not impossible, and tactical considerations demanded at least that the attempt be made. The Turkish General Staff desired apparently to get rid of the mines at all speed and with as little trouble as possible to themselves, and from that point of view the Hedjaz railway offered a more attractive route. The portage between it and Akaba is relatively short: and once the mines were safely at that village there was no difficulty in towing them out to sea. The explanation is not entirely convincing: for even the Turk must have been dubious whether mining the Gulf of Akaba would produce any result. But his mentality throughout the campaign was always unintelligible, and of it only one certain inference could be ever drawn: it could not produce a consecutive policy. In February Djemal sent his army across Sinai. His objective then was the conquest of Egypt: or alternatively to damage and block the Suez Canal. Having failed miserably in both, fortune a few weeks later placed in his hands a fresh weapon. At once he employed it upon operations which, however successful, could exercise no possible influence on the Suez Canal.

If Von Kressenstein, who had now assumed the command in Sinai, was depressed at the misuse of the mines, he showed that his troops were capable, not

only of transporting the engines across Sinai, but of floating them successfully in the Canal. So admirably was the second part of the task performed that the Turks employed upon the daring exploit were given less credit than they deserved, and it was commonly but erroneously believed in Egypt that the mine-laying parties were halted a mile or so from the bank, and there surrendered their charge to Egyptians who unperceived had crossed the Canal. It was a considerable achievement on the part of the enemy to drop into the Canal five out of the six mines at their disposal. Shipping had some narrow escapes, though actually only one vessel was struck. In that solitary case Providence was kind to the Defence: for the stricken ship remained afloat, and navigation was not interrupted. But Von Kressenstein and his mine layers unceasingly harassed the Canal Company. Nerves became so stretched that the sight of any object floating in the water was deemed sufficient to raise the alarm. Traffic then would be suspended throughout the length of the Canal, and not resumed until the water was swept clean from end to end. It was by no means easy from the deck of a steamer proceeding at a fair rate of speed to distinguish between hencoops just awash and surface mines: and the Company dared take no risk of an error of judgement. Nor could the troops always distinguish between enemy patrols reconnoitring in the vicinity of their posts and mine-laying parties. The same procedure had to be followed if a single solitary enemy scout was detected on the skyline. There was a general suspension of navigation in the Canal until the latter was reported to be clear of all obstruction. Later, the suspicion arose that objects which could be mistaken for surface mines were being dropped deliberately from the side of ships into the water, either from malicious desire to arrest navigation or as



an ill-timed jest, and so prevalent did the practice become that military authority was forced to denounce the act as a punishable offence under martial law.

By the irony of Fate these mines, neither modern in type nor reliable in action, were of French manufacture, each mine being plainly marked '— Cie, Paris.' Those picked up intact in the Gulf of Suez measured 36 in. by 30 in., and ballasted with typical Red Sea sand, just enough to keep them awash, contained charges of 100 lb. of gun-cotton. It is said that the makers in the first place had offered the mines to the French naval authorities, and that the latter after a series of trials had advised against their purchase. Following that refusal the sellers had hawked them round Europe. Each sea power in turn followed the example of France, until finally the Ottoman Government was induced to place an order. Other nations knew their business better: for, if the few mines which found their final resting-place in Egyptian territorial waters were fair specimens of the rest, Turkey in buying them made a poor bargain.

It is convenient at this point to complete the story of the efforts made by the active Von Kressenstein to embarrass the defenders of the Canal during the spring and summer of 1915. He had been left for this purpose in Sinai with three battalions of infantry and some mountain guns, and his ingenious brain was continually devising fresh expedients to worry the Indian troops. Having failed in mining and sniping, he conceived the idea of interrupting railway communications between Port Said and Ismailia. Two scouts one night, making their way through the inundation on the east bank, swam the Canal and boldly laid dynamite cartridges on the permanent way. Fortunately the cartridges were perceived before a train passed over them. A few days later, encouraged

by the ease with which the Canal could be crossed after dark, a second party made a more elaborate attempt to destroy the track. A heavy explosive charge this time was laid, and fired, and a wide gap in the rails torn out. But again the exploit failed, and the damage was observed before a train had reached the spot. Von Kressenstein had some excuse for his speech to the Turkish garrison in camp near Kossaima, when he said, 'The English accuse us of using spies. We have no need of them. We go to Egypt openly, and give them notice of our presence there.'

These raids upon the railway compelled the Defence to watch both banks of the Canal, and the troops, harassed by the double task, began to show signs of staleness. That feeling was the inevitable consequence of the nature of their employment for so many months. No type of duty in the field is more exhausting to a soldier than incessant patrol, and no occupation robs him so quickly of his power of initiative. The Indian sipahi never complained, but the strain of a continued passive defence had affected his spirit. Officers and men tied to entrenchments require the stimulus of occasional contact with the enemy if they are to preserve their capacity to take the offensive: but from one cause or another the many opportunities offered to teach the enemy a sharp lesson were not accepted. Von Kressenstein, a hundred miles away, on the other hand had no intention of resting his troops in summer quarters. Time and again he sent them across the desert. His objective was changed. Unable to damage the Canal, or even obstruct its navigation, he endeavoured now to prevent Great Britain making any further reduction in the strength of the garrison on this line. With this purpose he organized a series of flying columns. Moving rapidly from an advanced base, the columns

would demonstrate in front of the Canal, oblige the Defence to concentrate troops at the threatened points, and then break off contact before the defenders could counter-attack. As a tactical manœuvre the programme invariably succeeded. On every occasion the column performed its task and got safely away. It cannot be said that the dispositions made by the Defence to cut off the enemy were as happy. Either the counter-attack was delayed too long, or the units composing it were badly handled. The command could not complain that the enemy did not present chances. On one occasion a hostile column, estimated to consist of 300-400 infantry with two guns, was located a few miles to the north-east of Ismailia. The Turks, influenced perhaps by the conviction that the defenders would not budge from their entrenchments, under cover of night advanced to the Canal, and at dawn coolly opened fire upon a large dredger moored to the west bank. Never could the Defence hope for a more favourable opportunity; and a mixed force composed of the mounted brigade, half a battalion infantry, and two guns of the Egyptian Army hastily crossed the Canal to get astride of the Turkish line of retreat. Unhappily the orders of the commander of the pursuing force were vaguely drafted, or were misunderstood by a subordinate. At the psychological moment one unit was not in its allotted position. The enemy slipped through the gap, and made away without the loss of a man or a baggage animal. It was in accord with the *laissez-faire* spirit which then governed military operations in Egypt that the officers concerned in this deplorable failure suffered no punishment. In other theatres of war they would have received short shrift.

But strategically Von Kressenstein's efforts achieved no success. Far from being impressed with the importance of maintaining intact on the Canal the

two divisions of infantry originally allotted to the defence, the British commander estimated that some part of the force might be safely spared now for service elsewhere. Thus one brigade departed to Gallipoli, a second to Aden, and individual units to France. The risk incurred in agreeing to a reduction of the original strength of the Indian Expeditionary Force was not very great. It was known that the Turkish force in Sinai amounted to no more than a brigade: and once assured upon that point, and that the enemy's supply of mines was exhausted, the British commander on the Canal had little cause for anxiety. So closely watched were Turkish movements in the Peninsula, that it had become now practically impossible for reinforcements to reach the enemy without the fact being known at once at Ismailia. The Intelligence Service at the Defence Head-quarters was admirably organized. Little was planned or accomplished by Von Kressenstein or his staff which was not speedily reported to it. The Turks were well aware of the leakage of news: for they subjected every wandering Bedouin to pretty strict cross-examination before allowing him to proceed on his journey. But the Defence Intelligence had so many of the inhabitants of the Peninsula in its pay, and had instructed the agents so well in their duties, that no sooner did the enemy stop one leak than another was opened. Moreover, these agents when arrested were generally the masters of their captors in a battle of wits. Few people, in fact, can get the better of the Sinai Bedouin. He is never at a loss for a story to explain his movements: and if the worst comes to the worst he can assume an air of such impenetrable stupidity that even the most suspicious examiner will lose patience at last, and bid the man depart, thankful to be rid of a fool. Thus it was that British agents when caught were invariably

released after a few days of confinement. They even made use of the periods of arrest in Turkish camps. Becoming friendly with their guards they would return to Ismailia with all the gossip of Sinai. There is no better intelligence agent than the Sinai Bedouin once he understands that facts, and not fairy stories, are required from him: and, if the Turkish staff found him less useful and less reliable, the reason probably was due to their desire to hear what pleased them rather than to learn the truth.

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The retreat of the Turkish Expeditionary Force from the Suez Canal in February 1915 brought about in Cairo the consideration of a British offensive in Asia Minor, many arguing that the security of Egypt would be best attained by carrying the war into the enemy's country. It must be confessed that a military operation of this type is strangely attractive to the adventurous mind. To cut the enemy's lines of communication is a bold form of the counter-attack. But the risk attached to a failure is great. The invader may find the conditions of landing more difficult than he had anticipated, and in the end have to stand himself upon the defensive. In fine, no one of the Allied Governments was likely to sanction such an enterprise unless its result promised more than some temporary tactical advantage in a subsidiary theatre of the War. It was highly improbable that a successful landing in the Gulf of Adana would affect the general struggle. Even if Allied forces got astride of the railway connecting Constantinople with Aleppo, the manœuvre would only hem into Syria the Turkish armies operating on the Mesopotamian and Palestine fronts: a useful but not very important contribution to the War. To more cautious thinkers the proposal that Egypt, whose garrison had demonstrated the ease with which attack could be

repelled, must be protected by an incursion into Asia Minor appeared to be absurd. Whatever reasons there existed in favour of a campaign in that area, the defence of Egypt could hardly be accounted in their opinion as one. While argument raged in Egypt on the point, further discussion was checked by news of the decision of His Majesty's Government to strike at the heart of Turkey. It was pretty plain that there would be no troops to spare for a second expedition.

It is recognized now that the campaign on Gallipoli was handicapped from the outset. No commander led a more forlorn hope than Sir Ian Hamilton. He was short of men and short of material. The delay which took place in the landing robbed him of the weapon of surprise, and the enemy took advantage of their good fortune. The Peninsula became a fortress, bristling with guns, honeycombed with trenches. Nor were these the only disadvantages with which General Hamilton contended. The administrative problem was as perplexing as the technical. Egypt was the natural base of his army: but Egypt was not under his command, and units of his force were there on sufferance only.<sup>1</sup> The resources of this rich country, in fact, were never at his complete disposal. General Maxwell did not deny help. But he was not always informed of the requirements of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, and the needs of the Army in Egypt naturally was his first consideration.

The failure of the British fleet to force the passage of the Dardanelles had hardly become known in

<sup>1</sup> The base was stationed at Alexandria; but individual units not required for the moment on Gallipoli, details, and reinforcements were sent indiscriminately to Cairo and Port Said. With these troops the General Head-quarters of the Gallipoli Force would correspond directly, and would move them from one locality to another without troubling to inform local commanders in Egypt. The Canal Defence Force suffered a good deal of unnecessary inconvenience from this procedure.

Cairo when information was received that the M.E.F. were disembarking in Egypt in order to reorganize and refit. The 29th Division and the French contingent were landed in Alexandria; the Royal Naval Division at Port Said. Unfortunately, the latter port possessed no facilities for rapidly landing large numbers of men and animals. Shipping at anchor lies perforce in midstream, there being no quays which ocean-going vessels can accost. Worse still, there were no decked harbour craft which would serve as floating gangways or bridges to connect ship with shore, nor representatives of the Naval Transport Service who would be competent in these discouraging conditions to undertake the disembarkation of troops on a large scale. Port Said, commercially, is a port of transit, not of departure. At one period the Suez Canal Company, with an eye upon revenue, had entertained hopes of competing with Alexandria for the overseas dispatch of cotton; and development work in the harbour was undertaken to facilitate more rapid loading and discharge of cargo than was possible by lighter. Ground had been reclaimed, and two spacious basins, known respectively as the Sherif and the Abbas Basins, had been dredged and embanked. On the area thus reclaimed a number of solidly constructed warehouses were erected, and Port Said confidently anticipated a new era of trade. But the Egyptian Government, who had spent large sums in improving the port of Alexandria, looked coldly upon the project of the Canal Company, and cotton still went to Alexandria. The Company, therefore, decided to hold its hand for awhile, and await a more favourable moment. Thus, at the outbreak of war, vessels mooring in either of the two new basins could do so only at right angles to the length of the quay, and passengers and cargo were still ferried in lighters from ship to shore.

While this defect did not prevent the landing of

single individuals or the leisurely discharge of small consignments of cargo, it was sufficient to forbid the disembarkation of a Division at war strength. Time, for one matter, ruled out of court the employment of such dilatory and primitive methods. The Royal Naval Division was coming to Egypt with a view to refit, and the stay of the troops in the country was limited to a matter of a few days. Unless some more rapid method of disembarking the men and animals than ferrying them in clumsy lighters was improvised, it was pretty clear that the days allotted for the visit would hardly suffice to get the Division ashore. It followed, therefore, that some form of floating gangway must be found, which would allow men and animals to walk directly from the ship to land. The puzzle was to find a type of craft from the harbour suitable for this purpose. There were no decked lighters and no pontoons. The prospect before the Embarkation Staff looked gloomy, when a Naval Reserve officer came to their assistance. He proposed that a number of open lighters, built to carry coal, should be decked, and form the required gangways. While there was no lack of these lighters, or of timber to deck them, the Embarkation Staff hesitated before adopting the proposal. Expert opinion in the port was dead against the experiment. The coal lighter, it was urged, would not carry safely a heavy load in the condition suggested: a breath of wind, and the craft would capsize. But the author of the suggestion brushed away such fears as groundless. He was satisfied, on the contrary, that the open lighter, fitted under his advice with temporary decking, would be seaworthy in all conditions of weather. 'Give me the necessary timber and labour,' he said, 'and I'll guarantee the rest.' His judgement was triumphantly vindicated by the result. In the later stages of the War, Port Said conducted embarkations and disem-



barkations upon a scale of which in 1915 the Embarkation Staff did not dream. Not an accident occurred, and the improvised gangways built for the Royal Naval Division were in use up to the very end.

No difficulty had been anticipated in hiring the right type of lighter, and it was a little discouraging to discover that first one and then another owner excused himself from supplying the craft. Their attitude did not arise from ill-nature, or from dispute as to terms: it was due to a universal belief in the port that the new gangways were totally unseaworthy and would sink. Even at that early period of the War it was clearly impossible to replace harbour plant, and coaling agencies from their own point of view were justified in declining to sell or hire their lighters for the purposes of the Army. The latter was urged, instead, to seize those still remaining in the yard of the Deutches Kohlen Dépôt, a local firm which had closed down automatically on the first day of the War. Unfortunately the German-built lighter did not happen to be the type required. There were others in the port, particularly of French build and ownership, a good deal more suitable for decking. It would have been within the right of the local command to requisition these craft without more ado; but the first hint of the intention produced so violent a protest from the local consul of France, that it seemed wiser to put up with the second best. So for awhile the property of the French firms was left undisturbed, and over German planking the British troops marched from their ships to shore.

The anxieties of the inexperienced local staff did not end with a provision of floating gangways. These unwieldy craft next had to be manoeuvred into position alongside the transports. A stiff gale was blowing as the latter entered the port, and the light gangway was as difficult of control as a capricious woman. If

at this point the Division had not come to the assistance, days would have passed before the last gangway was coaxed into place. The task was really a sailor's job, not a landsman's, and the naval officers serving with the troops soon made light of the business. The dexterous manner in which, under their guidance, gangways were broken up, re-formed, and finally in true man-o'-war fashion brought alongside, excited the envious admiration of the Embarkation Staff. Nor did these enthusiastic volunteers stop there. Anxious to complete the job, they themselves got off, in double-quick time, the troops and the heavy baggage. Only the landing of the animals baffled them. Familiar with the vagaries of a lighter, they declined to contend with the eccentricities of the mule. Their discretion was justified. The conditions of the sea transport of animals which prevailed during the first few months of the War were deplorable, and horses and mules were carried in vessels entirely unsuited for the duty. Any type of tramp steamer at that period apparently was considered by the Admiralty to be good enough for a horse-ship. How a mule was ever enticed on board or persuaded to leave his stall was an eternal puzzle. There were horse-ships sailing then in the Mediterranean, in which the stables were reached only through passages so low that the animals had to be dragged through by sheer force. Horses could be relied upon, more or less, to follow a leader; but the less tractable mule absolutely would refuse to move. Wild *mêlées*, in which man and beast were inextricably mixed, took place on such occasions, until finally the obstinate animal was shot into his temporary home. The horse-transport accompanying the Naval Division were neither better nor worse than the average; but the local staff would have passed many uneasy moments, had not half a dozen officers, who had little to learn from Army Regulations

on the subject of handling animals, undertaken the operation. In this remarkable Division, apparently there were masters of every trade.

Sir Ian Hamilton disembarked with the troops. He seemed in no cheerful mood, and in reply to an idle question concerning the prospects of a successful landing on Gallipoli, observed, 'It's going to be a bloody business.' That grim comment was characteristic of the speaker; for he had that well-balanced mind which enables the owner to contemplate calmly the risks of an enterprise. But whatever misgivings the leader may have felt, they did not appear to be shared by the battalion officers of the Naval Division. People more unconscious of a rising storm would be difficult to find. In their belief, the landing at Gallipoli was to be the brilliant prelude of a movement which would close with the triumphal march of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force into Constantinople. Talk in camp was more of the prospects of woodcock shooting in the Greek islands than of the resistance of the enemy, and quite a number of officers, in expectation of sport, had brought with them guns and even dogs. The rank and file, with more excuse, were equally light-hearted. In fact, with the exception of a weak Brigade of Royal Marines, who kept closely to themselves, officers and men wore the air of being engaged in some joyous adventure. Units had their marquee tents, their motor-cars, and their bands: nothing, in truth, which money could buy, or troopships could carry, was absent from their equipment. All the Division required now was an open road to Constantinople: and that, unfortunately, was precisely what the enemy were determined to deny. But the Naval Division were not the only people in Egypt at this period who thought lightly of the fighting powers of the Turkish soldier. The British community generally shared the same view.

A totally erroneous idea of the military resources and spirit of the Ottoman Government had been formed from the failure of Djemal's attack upon the Suez Canal. Not only were individuals victims of this fallacy, but the Egyptian Government also shared the prevailing impression. Before the M.E.F. even had left Egypt, two members of the Civil Service were instructed to proceed at a moment's notice to Constantinople upon secret service business. The patience of the pair was sorely tried.

Until the visit of the M.E.F., Egypt had been spared the spy mania which seemed to have infected so badly every country in Europe. It was, of course, only a question of time before the contagion spread to Africa; but during the winter of 1914-15 the Intelligence Services in Cairo and Ismailia had been more concerned in watching the movements of the enemy in Palestine and Sinai than in encouraging civilians to shadow individuals whose behaviour and movements appeared to be suspicious. The newcomers, fresh from home, were bitten terribly with the malady, and in a seaport of cosmopolitan population like Port Said they found virgin and profitable soil for the fascinating occupation of spy-hunting. Perfectly respectable householders of the town now found themselves under suspicion. Either they had been observed furtively to be destroying papers and casting the fragments into the sea, or they were accused of signalling at night-time to some imaginary vessel hovering in the offing. It is strange, in time of war, how people, sane at other moments, seem to lose all sense of proportion once they yield to the belief that enemy agents surround them. To these enthusiasts every innocent incident is charged with suspicious meaning. If a light is observed to be burning in a room facing seaward, watch must be kept lest the occupant is engaged in unlawful signalling. It is

waste of time to point out that a single low-powered light is useless for such a purpose, or that an unintelligible sequence of dots and dashes pouring from the room is but the result of the action of a curtain flapping across the beam of light. The spy-catcher accepts no such simple explanation of the phenomenon. To the first objection he will answer that the enemy's row boats approach closely to the shore, and to the second that the message is being sent in cipher. The pursuit never flagged, and when the M.E.F. sailed for Gallipoli, others infected by the fascination of the game took a hand. Among them were the officers of the mercantile marine. Equally convinced of the presence of spies, they deceived themselves in a new and more subtle fashion. Wireless installations, they asserted gravely, were being secretly set up in the town, and nightly were transmitting to the enemy full information of what was passing in Egypt. Many a patriotic mariner spent lonely vigils in the task of locating the peculiar hiss distinctive of wireless telegraphy. There were other forms, also, of deception. The common Egyptian pigeon returning to its cot was frequently shot at, on the chance of a message to the enemy being concealed under the wings. No doubt in Egypt there were individuals ready enough for a consideration to become Turkish intelligence agents. But they had no leader and no organization. Of innumerable reports of alleged attempts to communicate with the enemy investigated in the Canal Zone, not one was proved. The Turk had no genius for this form of war work.

If the other units of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force left the United Kingdom in as great a hurry as the Naval Division apparently had done, the Commander-in-Chief was well advised to come to Egypt to refit. He could hardly have disembarked his army on an open beach in the condition in which

the troops reached Egypt. Unless appearances were deceitful, the men had been marched on board the transports without consideration of the probable fact that disembarkation would be made in the face of the enemy. Baggage and stores were in one ship, their owners in another. The first line transport, in particular, was hopelessly mixed. There was not a unit which could recognize its own mules, and the first task of the divisional staff was to sift and redistribute equipment and transport. Necessary as this measure was, it did not add to the chances of an easy landing at Gallipoli, and every day's delay in Egypt granted the enemy a further period of grace to complete his defensive preparations. General Hamilton, no doubt, in turn was able to perfect his own plans, and establish closer co-operation with the Navy. His original force was ridiculously inadequate for the undertaking, and the delay permitted various reinforcements to reach him in time for the landing. But the balance of advantage remained with the Turks.

The Naval Division was the first of the units raised for the duration of the War to be seen in Egypt, and it was interesting to compare the rank and file of the new armies with that of the old. In steadiness on parade and in behaviour in camp there was little to choose between the two. What the old soldier had acquired by experience, the new picked up by exercising intelligence. But at that point resemblance ceased. There was missed from the face of the war recruit the grim expression of stern resolution, so distinctive of the pre-war soldier on parade. Its place was filled now by the frank ingenuous stare of youth, which seemed to ask the reason of each word of command. Outside a military life, subordination of individual will counts for little, and civilians better serve their employers by making use of the wits which Providence has given them. But on the battle-

field initiative in a private soldier is less valuable. It is the machine, not the individual, who wins victory. In his short apprenticeship to arms, the new soldier had no time to learn every trick of his new trade. The more necessary, then, did it seem to some critics that his period of training be devoted to instruction in field exercises, and not to the practice of spectacular parade movements. It may be true, as many hold to this day, that the secret of efficiency in the field lies in the preliminary drudgery of the barrack square. But such a contention presupposes in the education of a soldier that time is of no great value. That was not the case in Egypt during the early summer of 1915. There was something mournful in the sight of the Royal Naval Division at Port Said, practising ceremonial drill morning after morning during their short stay in Egypt, in view of an approaching inspection by the Commander-in-Chief. A more impressive manœuvre at that moment surely would have been to exercise the troops in landing from small boats on the open beach.

Within a few hours of the disembarkation of the M.E.F. in Gallipoli, General Hamilton was sending out signals of distress. Egypt, anxiously listening for news, was the first to hear the call. The tale of losses among battalion officers made sad reading. Without leaders, such of the rank and file as were fortunate enough to survive the ordeal could go no farther. The Egyptian and the Sudan military authorities sent every available officer to fill the gaps. The rank and file also had suffered as terribly; and to replace these casualties the Canal Defence surrendered a Brigade, and the Army in Egypt its Territorial Division. The Indian troops went off in as high spirits as the Naval Division had done. One theatre of war to them was much as another: and after the manner of soldiers of every type and of every nation, they welcomed the change of

scene. But no sooner had the Brigade landed on Gallipoli than it was whispered that danger lay in employing Mohammedans to fight Mohammedans. Never had suspicion less foundation. The units of this particular Brigade during their term of service on the Suez Canal had given ample proof of loyalty to the Empire. Not a man from them had deserted to the enemy. But once alarm on such a point is excited, the end is inevitable. The whisper becomes a roar, and surmise is accepted as fact. It was useless for the Brigadier to protest, or to declare his own confidence in the troops. The M.E.F. would take no risk. Careless of Imperial considerations, G.H.Q. hastily re-embarked the two Mohammedan units of the Brigade, and instructed the transports to sail at once for Egypt. It is difficult to conceive a decision better calculated to wound the *amour propre* of the Indian Army. It was bad enough to display open mistrust of the loyalty of two battalions, each possessing an untarnished record; but to expose the innocent officers and the rank and file to the jeers of their comrades on the Suez Canal was unpardonable. General Maxwell had better sense. The proper course clearly was to utilize the services of the Mohammedan units in fresh theatres of war, and he was successful in diverting the transports from Port Said to Marseilles.<sup>1</sup>

Egypt now became one vast hospital. As transport followed transport, each filled to overflowing with mangled humanity, into the ports of Alexandria and Port Said, it was soon evident that the estimated

<sup>1</sup> Of the two battalions sent away from Gallipoli in these circumstances, one had the singular good fortune to visit in turn all the principal theatres of war. Beginning with the Suez Canal, it went to Gallipoli; thence to France, and from France to Mesopotamia. After a brief spell of service in India, where it took part in operations on the North-West Frontier, it was sent to Salonica. There can be few, if any, battalions of the British and Indian armies to equal this record.



accommodation in Egypt for the sick and wounded off Gallipoli was far short of the actual requirements. Overwhelmed by their responsibilities, the Army medical authorities turned for help to the Egyptian Government, and generously the latter responded to the appeal. All suitable buildings, the schools and colleges, were placed at once at the disposal of the Army. The hospitals of the State either were surrendered entirely, or a proportion of the beds were evacuated for the use of the troops; and finally the Public Health Department offered their resources and skilled personnel to meet the emergency. They were critical moments, the first few days. There were no nursing sisters available to staff the improvised hospitals; there were no beds to accommodate the cases; and there was no Red Cross organization to minister to the comfort of the sick. Some of the deficiencies should have been avoided by the exercise of reasonable forethought; others perhaps were inevitable. The medical failure was no worse than the military. All misfortunes connected with the Gallipoli campaign arose mainly from an insular inclination to think too lightly of Turkish spirit and Turkish resources. A spirit of careless optimism seemed inseparable in 1915 from every British conception.

By dint of tremendous efforts, organization arose out of temporary confusion, and military administration asserted itself. Within a short period no less than five General Hospitals were operating in Egypt: each filled with sick and wounded far beyond the proper limits of its capacity. In time every wounded soldier was accommodated with a bed. Behind the General Hospitals were others in buildings given to the Army by the Egyptian Government, and tent hospitals hastily set up by the Public Health Department.<sup>1</sup> Finally, came a number of semi-

<sup>1</sup> The temporary hospital provided from the resources of the

private hospitals, and of convalescent homes, both for officers and men, maintained either by public subscription or by the munificence of private individuals. Nor did the general community fail at this moment. Its former apathy disappeared, and men and women vied with one another in desire to help. There was place for every volunteer. Hospital trains from the two seaports daily were disgorging in the capital heavy convoys of wounded. It was difficult enough for the medical authorities to find sufficient doctors to accompany the patients: to provide a nursing establishment was impossible. Yet, if the serious cases during the fatiguing journeys were to receive attention, women must be found to travel on the hospital trains. The reception rooms at railway stations also were crying for personnel. Each walking case wanted his bandage adjusted as he stepped on the platform, and that cup of tea so ardently desired by men suffering from the pain of wounds. From the regular hospitals the matrons were calling loudly for professional

Ophthalmic Travelling Hospital Section of the Public Health Department is a typical instance of the goodwill shown by the State to meet the emergency. The Section in question already had done good work for the Army, forming two Clearing Hospitals in the Canal Zone for the reception of wounded Turkish soldiers. When the first news of the heavy casualties on Gallipoli reached Egypt, the Director at once broke up the two Clearing Hospitals, and combining them into a single stationary unit, placed it at the disposal of the military authorities in Port Said, to receive the first cases landed there. Simultaneously the Public Health Department received a pathetic appeal from the commander of the French Contingent attached to the M.E.F., to provide for his troops, and two more Ophthalmic Travelling Hospitals were withdrawn from their normal duties. From them a Field Hospital for French soldiers was established at Zagazig. Encouraged by the success of these efforts, the Director of the Ophthalmic Section embarked upon a more ambitious undertaking. Using further travelling hospitals as the nucleus, he formed at Alexandria a complete General Hospital of 700 beds. The achievement was the more notable, inasmuch as he depended entirely upon Egyptians for all hospital personnel.

assistance, and the commandants for women to visit and console the patients. It was not the business of the Army to make provision for such needs as these : and the civilian population cheerfully undertook them. But to mobilize men and women, to apportion them their duties, to encourage and maintain the enthusiasm of the voluntary workers when the novelty of the occupation wore thin, required organization, and in Cairo there was none. Alexandria had set a better example. Careless whether authority approved or not, the English men and women of that town had taken time by the forelock. At the first hint of probable fighting on the Suez Canal, a number of public-spirited people opened subscription lists, and formed a provisional First Aid unit of their own. Cairo, and in more humble fashion Port Said, towns which hitherto had lagged behind, now awoke. In each there sprang up a branch, attempting to accomplish within a few hours a task which only well-planned organization successfully could treat.

At Port Said, when the first wounded were landed, there were no nursing sisters, and few doctors. By dint of strenuous exertion, the two British representatives of the local Public Health Department had improvised out of slender resources enough hospital accommodation to receive the convoy. From their Egyptian staff they found medical officers ; and from resident Englishwomen the required number of nurses. The town responded splendidly to the emergency. As difficulties arose they were overcome. The first point to settle was the transport of the lying down cases from ship to hospital. There was no mechanical or even suitable horse transport available for the purpose, and no prospect of finding it. Stretcher-carrying parties, therefore, were formed among the older men ; and patients in this fashion were borne to their beds. Women unfit for the laborious work of nursing organized themselves into hospital visitors. Port Said,

suffering from depression of trade, had little money to spare; but so generous were the contributions from the town to the local Red Cross, that nowhere in Egypt were the sick and wounded off Gallipoli more kindly entertained than here. It is sad to relate that the hospitality of the town and the kindly courtesy of the medical staff frequently were abused by their recipients. Patients permitted to take gentle exercise outside the walls of the hospital would seize the opportunity to indulge in less innocent amusement. Frolic of that type plays havoc with men lately risen from a bed of sickness, and the doctors complained bitterly of the lack of self-control among their patients. It was difficult to think of a suitable remedy. To confine the men to the narrow limits of the hospital would only retard their period of convalescence, and in any case was a measure impossible to apply locally with success. There were no troops available to supply hospital guards, and no military police in the town to arrest men who broke the rules. More difficult still was it to find suitable means of punishing the offenders. The old Army regulation which forbade the issue of pay to troops in hospital had not yet been rescinded, and since the men had no money they could not be fined. Yet some of the indiscretions committed were pardonable. Frequently they arose from the mistaken kindness of well-intentioned civilians, who invited convalescents to drink to the confusion of the King's enemies. But there were others committed by patients who seemed temporarily to have lost their sense of proportion. Such individuals, their vanity excited by the petting which they received in hospital, believed themselves to be heroes, and objected to any interference with their liberty from officers who had not undergone the ordeal of Gallipoli. There was but one method of dealing with such people; to evacuate them from the comfortable and homelike life of the hospitals of Port Said to the more rigorous

discipline of the Army Hospitals. It was in little points like these that the difference between the old professional soldier and the youth who was serving for the duration of the War was so acute. The habit of obedience to military authority would remain with the first, no matter how often his environment changed, while the second seized the first opportunity to shed his discipline.

But the men had grievances. Withholding their pay while in hospital was one. The regulation on the point may have been useful enough in the past: its maintenance in 1915 was absurd. Another grievance more sentimental but felt almost as acutely was the absence of ceremony in the conduct of funerals. There was no actual irreverence, but soldiers were laid to rest with little thought of the sacrifice which they had made. Survivors still in hospital thought that the dead deserved the conventional honours paid in time of peace to a soldier on his last journey. There was no gun carriage to convey the corpse to the cemetery, and no firing party to give the warrior his last salute on earth. On the actual battlefield it is not possible to pay marks of respect to the killed. Frequently they must be buried to the sound of the enemy's guns, a worthier serenade than the bugles of their comrades. But in Egypt more might have been done to meet the wishes of the living. The motor lorry was a poor substitute for the gun carriage, and an odd soldier or two as coffin-bearer for the presence of a firing party. The reply to protest on the point was unvaried: 'England requires her guns and rifles for sterner purposes.' Of the dead who fill the war cemeteries of Cairo and other towns of Egypt truly it may be said—

Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,  
As his corpse to the rampart we hurried:  
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot  
O'er the grave where our hero we buried.

But whatever the shortcomings of the medical service of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force may have been in the first days of May, by midsummer the imperfections were remedied. Ample accommodation in Egypt now existed for many more cases than were likely to come from Gallipoli. Existing hospitals had been expanded, and fresh units were come from home. The medical profession in England had risen nobly to the emergency. Harley Street sent to Egypt its most famous physicians and surgeons, and country villages the general practitioners. There was no longer a dearth of nursing sisters or of women to perform humbler duties in the wards. Finally, the hospital transport service between Gallipoli and Egypt was working smoothly. It may be thought, then, that the troubles of the Director of Medical Services in Egypt were at an end. They were not: new and perplexing problems confronted him. To provide the sick and wounded with proper attention and to cure them were only part of his duties: an equally important, no less difficult, task was to devise means whereby officers and men restored to health would be sent back to the line of battle in the shortest possible period of time. Already public comment was aroused by the number of troops, evacuated from Gallipoli for medical treatment, who amused themselves in Cairo and other towns while their General on the Peninsula was crying to be given reinforcements. It was natural enough that the men should prefer the fleshpots of Egypt to the rations of Gallipoli. It was even natural that many should find in some temporary disablement an excuse to pass the rest of the War in the security of some Egyptian *dépôt*. There is, in truth, little romance about a battlefield to those who once have endured its sights and sounds. Rarely do they wish to repeat the experience. Authority responsible for the prosecution of war may under-

stand, but cannot share that desire. It is their hard duty to smother sympathy, and to see that periods of hospital treatment are restricted to the fewest possible number of days. If figures afforded any proof, the Medical Service in Egypt was hardly performing its duty to the Empire in this direction. It was difficult to believe that in the month of October 1915 the percentage of officers discharged from hospital and classified as A1 amounted to no more than 56. Either the medical treatment must be faulty, or the Invaliding Boards were over-indulgent. Nor was this all. The number of officers and men sent home as unfit for further service in the field was very large. It did not require much perspicacity or knowledge of mankind to perceive that the system of medical classification was at fault, not the hospital treatment. There were too many Invaliding Boards, and no standard of physical fitness common to them all. The first step was to abolish the Boards: the second to appoint carefully selected medical officers to undertake the classification of patients of every hospital.<sup>1</sup> The new brooms swept clean. Within twelve months the percentage of officers classified on discharge from hospital as A had risen to 82: while that of officers classified as B had sunk from 24 to 7. The reform did not come a moment too soon.

<sup>1</sup> No less than 117,000 rank and file from the military forces serving in Egypt at one period or another came under the review of these officers. In 1916 the percentage of soldiers evacuated from hospital and classified A was as low as 72. Two years later it had risen to 92. But towards the end of the War medical classification became so intricate that no combatant officer could master its complexities.

## VIII

### ARMENIAN REFUGEES

FOLLOWING the entry of Turkey into the War, a French naval squadron sailed into Port Said harbour. The appearance of the ships created some surprise, for in local circles it was understood that Great Britain had undertaken the sole responsibility of the defence of Egypt. But within the course of the next few days the presence of the squadron was explained. The Vice-Admiral in command<sup>1</sup> took some pains to make known that his duties had no connexion with the defence of the Suez Canal. The business of his cruisers was to demonstrate off the coast of Syria. In that country France claimed traditional interests which she had no intention of relinquishing ; and the dispatch of the squadron to Port Said may have been intended to remind her Ally of that fact. Meanwhile the Vice-Admiral declared a close blockade of Syrian waters. With the number of cruisers under his command D'Artige had no difficulty in accomplishing the programme. Based on Port Said during the following twelve months, the squadron patrolled the coast incessantly. Evidently France was prepared to take risks to preserve her rights in Syria : otherwise the blockade, though effective enough, hardly appeared of sufficient importance to justify the employment of a powerful naval squadron on the duty, or the incidental destruction by the warships of a few insignificant factories and supply dumps along the coastline to balance the danger of cruising in Syrian waters. It is true that the risk was almost negligible at first, inasmuch as the Mediterranean in the winter months

<sup>1</sup> Vice-Admiral D'Artige du Fournet.



of 1914-15 was free from enemy submarines. But the immunity did not last long. By midsummer submarines were operating continuously in the eastern half of the sea. No doubt the slow-sailing and unprotected troop transport running between Egypt and Gallipoli was a more profitable and defenceless prey than the swiftly moving cruiser. Yet clearly it could be only a matter of time before the leisurely promenade of the French squadron off the coast of Syria would be interrupted. That moment presently arrived. One of the cruisers was sunk with all hands, and France rightly thought that the squadron had fulfilled its mission. The Vice-Admiral was recalled with the bulk of his ships. Before quitting the station he decided to make a final demonstration, and, to this end, during the last days of August 1915 he took the whole squadron to sea.

Seizing the opportunity afforded by war, the Turks were pressing hard the unfortunate Armenian race. Terrible stories of the sufferings and massacres endured by the latter had reached Europe. Protests on the subject were made by the Allies, and Germany had been urged by neutral nations to stop the campaign of rapine and murder believed to be instigated, if not actually directed, by Constantinople. It is not possible to say how far each ghastly tale was true in detail. In the East exaggeration is so habitual that the most plausible story requires corroboration from independent sources before it can be accepted as description of actual fact. But on one point there can be little doubt: the individual Turk, when passion is inflamed, seeks in the Armenian the first victim of his lust. It is less easy to believe that the Ottoman Government at any time deliberately has planned the complete extermination of the race. Single Ministers may have favoured a proposal of this nature and even encouraged provincial officials to harry the Armenian

population. But Turkish Cabinets do not plan: they drift. To blot out an entire section of the nation would be a practical measure far beyond their capacity to initiate. There is a second reason, also, why no Ottoman Government would desire utterly to destroy the Armenian race. As the Jew is the banker of the West, so is the Armenian the money-lender of the East, and Turkey cannot dispense with his services. It is the individual Turk, and not the nation, whose cupidity and cruelty are excited by the sight of the prosperous Armenian, and, if the stories of refugees may be believed, their suffering is due more to the avarice and caprice of single officials than to Turkish administration. The object of every Turk entrusted with authority is to enrich himself at the expense of the weak: and in the accomplishment of this ambition neither self-respect nor conscience stand in his path. There are few depths in chicanery which he will not plumb to the bottom, if thereby he can extract profit for himself: and what he takes without scruple he spends without shame. *Alieni appetens, sui profusus.*

Nor is the Armenian wholly virtuous. In usury as merciless as the Jew, he will squeeze the last piastre out of his victim. He distrusts all: none more than his own compatriots. To submit to their domination he believes in his heart to be an evil but one step removed from Turkish rule. Such political conceptions as a Kingdom of Armenia, governed by Armenians for Armenians, may be dismissed as fantasies, attractive only to those whose knowledge of the race is not first hand, or to those whose mentality is warped by hatred of Islam. Equally mistaken are Englishmen who carelessly think of the Turk as a fine fellow, courteous and hospitable to the stranger, and meeting, with unruffled calmness, fortune good or evil. The portrait would be as far from the truth as

hazardous adventure. He was sighted by a cruiser and taken on board, where he told a piteous tale. Ten thousand of his people, inhabitants of villages on the slopes of Jebel Musa (a commanding eminence south of Alexandretta), he declared had been attacked by their Turkish neighbours. The men defended their homes until ammunition was exhausted. Then step by step, encumbered with women and children, they retreated to the sea. Fearful losses had been sustained in the withdrawal, and half their number were dead. The remnant on the beach was resisting the foe as best it could. But the end was near: and unless help came quickly no Armenian of Jebel Musa would be left alive.

The Admiral's position was delicate. A personal reconnaissance assured him of the truth of the priest's grim story. On the other hand, the operation of embarking off an open beach some thousands of men, women, and children in face of hostile fire involved considerable danger. Marines and naval ratings landed to cover the operation might become entangled in serious fighting, and their withdrawal in such conditions prove a costly affair. It was a matter, also, of grave consideration, whether the urgency of the appeal justified the risk to the ships engaged in the operation. The embarkation of the refugees would take many hours to complete, and if the enemy submarines became aware of the position of the squadron conditions would favour an attack. Yet in common humanity the Admiral could not leave the Armenians to their certain fate on the beach: and influenced by this motive he directed the whole squadron to proceed at full speed to the locality. Meanwhile he communicated the facts to Paris and invited instructions. But the French Government, however interested in principle in the fate of Armenia, were occupied at that moment with matters of

greater importance than the problem of rescuing refugees, and postponed consideration of their reply to a more favourable hour. Delay was precisely the factor which the situation did not allow. The refugees were huddled together on the seashore: the French cruisers were steaming impatiently in the offing: and the Turks, momentarily checked by the presence of the ships, were awaiting the opportunity to close with the helpless men and women. Forty-eight hours having elapsed, the Admiral repeated his communication. There was a grim humour in the belated reply. Paris, with studied simplicity, inquired 'Where is Jebel Musa?'

The Admiral would wait no longer: and taking matters into his own hands he embarked the refugees. The operation was conducted with great skill. The sea was rough, the beach dangerous, and the Turks maintained a desultory fire upon the French and Armenians alike. But little or no loss of life occurred, and the refugees and their belongings were got safely on board. The first half of the problem thus was solved: the second still remained. What country would accept a company of 5,000 homeless and destitute persons as its guests? Strictly speaking, in the circumstances it was the business of France to provide the required accommodation. She had undertaken the duty of rescue, and upon her fell therefore the responsibility of the maintenance of the refugees. But the nearest point of French territory was some days distant from Syria. Warships make indifferent transports: the whole squadron temporarily would be immobilized: and lastly, the Admiral was uncertain whether his Government would approve the employment of the cruisers upon this unusual naval operation. Many considerations, therefore, pointed in favour of finding a temporary home for the refugees elsewhere than on French soil. Obviously in these circumstances

either Cyprus or Egypt would form the ideal dumping-ground, and to Cyprus the Admiral made his first appeal. But the Governor of that island was hardly in a position to accede to the request. He had enough to do just then to feed his own people. Cyprus was suffering from depression of trade. Business with the Levant, her main market, had been killed by the War. Even the profitable cattle and vegetable trade with Egypt languished : for enemy submarines already were taking a heavy toll from coastal shipping. From this island, therefore, the appeal met with flat refusal, and the Admiral, wasting no further time, set sail for Egypt. He was too acute now to give any hint of his intention. The curt rejection of the appeal to Cyprus warned him that Egypt, if advised beforehand, might follow a similar course. He decided, therefore, to present the latter with a *fait accompli*. Accident had increased his personal responsibility : for at this moment he received the news of his transfer to a new sphere of action. He could not well leave the problem of the disposal of the Armenians as a legacy to his successor in Egyptian waters, nor, if the worst came to the worst, would he be now in a position to arrange for their transport to French territory. Altogether the Admiral was in an embarrassing position.

Egypt generously extricated him from the dilemma : but the business of settling the refugees into camp would have been less protracted had there been among them men of authority. But in accordance with Armenian character the men would acknowledge none of their number as leaders. There was no quarrelling in the community, but there was no co-operation. They were the most individualistic people possible to conceive. Following the customary British impulse to decentralize, the first commandant of the camp selected individuals to superintend the routine duties. He had considerable difficulty in

persuading any refugee to accept office. Later he understood better their reluctance: Armenians do not obey Armenians. The point was not clear to him at first, and in the belief that his choice had been faulty, he invited the camp to appoint its own section leaders. This result was even less successful. There were no candidates. Jealousy of one another was the cause. So suspicious are this race of their own kith and kin that their best friends must feel doubtful whether Armenians are fit to undertake the duties of serious government. The mistrust of each man for his neighbour would handicap severely the initial stages of the experiment if this unfortunate characteristic did not ruin it beyond redemption. Before the camp had been established many weeks the inmates showed other unprepossessing qualities. The open countenance of the male Armenian belies his real nature. He is the least ingenuous of men, and little reliance could be placed upon his word. His sturdy physique concealed a profound antipathy to all forms of manual labour. One of the many depressing features in connexion with these refugees was their disinclination to undertake any description of work which would improve the amenities of the place. No Armenian, except under compulsion, would move hand or leg in such a cause. He preferred to idle away the day in desultory fishing, or in listlessly watching ships pass up and down the Canal. Yet, despite this laziness of habit, the refugee preserved throughout his self-respect. No man or woman begged from chance visitors to the camp. The same instinct forbade either sex to express any sense of gratitude for the benefits which they received. No word of thanks ever crossed Armenian lips: nor, to be fair to the inmates, did one of complaint. They bore their misfortune with a certain dignity. They spoke not of it openly among themselves, and never to the camp

authorities. Justifiably, perhaps, these people saw in the hospitality offered by Egypt nothing but patronage, and resented silently their condition of destitution. The Armenians at Port Said were not the only refugees of the world who felt the bitterness of their position. Others, temporarily homeless through the action of war, earlier had shared that trait.

The women were more amenable to kindness. Physically equal to the men, temperamentally they were of finer quality. An idle woman in the camp was an infrequent sight. They were admirable needlewomen and excellent housewives. Later, when, under the auspices of the London Society of the Friends of Armenia, the women learnt the carpet and lace industries, they put by respectable sums of money even though their husbands took toll of the savings to buy themselves tobacco and other luxuries of life. Yet, even among the wives and mothers, of charity or friendliness towards others there was little trace.

If the general attitude of the inhabitants of the camp, both male and female, towards one another seemed strangely remote from ordinary human relationships, one is free to confess profound admiration for the religious side of their nature. They were intensely devotional, not only outwardly, but in their hearts. Their profound reverence for God did not stop as that of some Christians at formal worship: they carried His influence into every act of their daily lives. Their moral rectitude was extraordinary. Theft and sexual intrigue alike were unknown in the camp. The various sections had no dividing boundaries: there were no police to arrest mischievous members of the community; and save at night-time the curtains of every tent were raised to admit the wind. Every opportunity, in fact, was offered to the evil doer: nothing was lacking but his presence.

Within the course of a week or two the Egyptian

Government assumed responsibility for the future maintenance of the Armenians, and local military authority withdrew from the task. It was high time that the change was made, for the administration of helpless people is the business of a civilian and not of a military organization. An Administrator of wide experience in handling refugees was appointed to take charge of the camp. He soon found himself in difficulties. He had neither the power nor the means to punish Armenians who transgressed his rules, and frequently he had to call upon the Army for assistance. Other problems met him: among them was the welfare of the children. There were perhaps a couple of thousand boys and girls of all ages running wild in the camp. To the new Administrator that spectacle was deplorable, and he sought to remedy the shame of it by enlisting the support of the parents. He was disappointed: not a man or a woman would stir a finger to build a school, much less teach in it. The Administrator then sought assistance from the priests who had accompanied the refugees. But sectarian differences apparently divide Armenia on the subject of the education of the young as sharply as they do in England, and the priests, squabbling among themselves, gave no help. Undiscouraged, he looked next to the Armenian colony. Nothing indicates more clearly how little national feeling exists among Armenians than the poor response given by the well-to-do members of the community to the appeal from Port Said. They were not asked a great deal: no more in fact than to provide adequate accessories to the camp, such as schools and hospitals, which they themselves under the protection of the Egyptian Government were enjoying at the moment elsewhere in Egypt. Their patriotism was unequal to the suggestion. Few visited the camp: fewer still subscribed money to its support. Except a handful



of the more humble members, the colony seemed supremely indifferent whether their unfortunate countrymen and women at Port Said lived or died. What charitable assistance was given to the Administrator came either from England or the United States. The rich and influential Armenian in Egypt contributed little in proportion to his wealth and station.

It was not the fault of the Administrator that so many of the male refugees spent their days in idleness. At an early stage he had been successful in persuading military supply officers to employ the able-bodied members of the camp : but although the employment was paid at market rates, and was well within the capacity of the refugees to perform, the offer met with discouraging and indifferent response. No more than 25 per cent. of the estimated number of able-bodied men in camp would volunteer. The duty consisted of loading and discharging harbour craft : laborious work perhaps at times, but easily executed by Egyptian labourers of inferior stamina. But for all his fine physique the Armenian is no match for the Egyptian in manual work, and apart from a standard of results he was unsatisfactory in other ways. The regular and punctual attendance required by the Army was distasteful to him. He would work just long enough to earn sufficient money to satisfy his craving for tobacco : but once that want was supplied he resumed his idle habits. Other difficulties connected with his employment meanwhile had supervened. The medical officer responsible for the health of the refugees looked with disfavour upon the daily contact of inmates of the camp with Egyptian labourers. There was anxiety expressed lest the Armenians should develop some contagious disease, and infect the women and children. Out of consideration for the Administrator's predicament, the military authorities thereupon pitched a special camp

for the workers from the camp in the neighbourhood of the Supply Area. But the men declined to sleep in the tents, and finally the employers who had acted out of pure good nature withdrew their offer. In another direction the Administrator was more successful. He found work for a number of the older men in camp bakeries, the profits from which were devoted to the upkeep of the schools and hospitals. In course of time the bakeries became popular institutions throughout the length of the Canal. There was no canteen which did not stock Armenian pastry, and many a soldier who served with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force must remember still the flavour of the famous 'Armenian bun'.

Yet, despite these efforts, the number of stout fellows hanging about the precincts of the camp did not seem to diminish, and more than one mind in Cairo, anxiously searching for fresh labour in war areas, had considered the Armenian refugees at Port Said as possible victims. France, with customary foresight, already had envisaged the possibility of their employment, and had not ceased to impress upon this little company of Armenians that she was their saviour from the hands of the Turks. Periodically naval officers, carefully selected, would land in the camp and preach this doctrine. The Egyptian Government welcomed the propaganda in the expectation that it would lead to their relief of the maintenance of the refugees: and British military authority was indifferent. From the first the French thought of giving the refugees some military training: but they had no means of obliging men to attend the drills, and when the novelty of the occupation had passed the Armenian stayed away. France did not press the point, content with what she had accomplished. Meanwhile the Canal Defence conceived the idea of training a few Armenians in the use of high

explosives. The programme was to land parties in Asia Minor and raid the Turkish lines of communication. Hazardous as the exploit would be, it might have been successful under resolute leadership. There was great enthusiasm in the camp when the proposal was first explained. Every man professed an ardent desire to revenge himself upon the Turk. But when volunteers were called for the early enthusiasm died away. Not only was the initial response to the appeal disappointing, but, of those who did come forward, only a few completed the preliminary course of instruction. The cautious Armenian, on reflection, preferred to obtain his revenge vicariously, and at the end it was very doubtful whether any one of the volunteers would be willing to go. There was nothing, therefore, in these conditions to do but to abandon the undertaking. The next suggestion of making use of the refugees came from Salonica. That area was attempting to form a Mule Transport Corps on the lines of the Egyptian Camel Transport unit. The animals could be got if drivers only were found. Salonica, therefore, asked Egypt for help, and the Expeditionary Force bethought itself of the Armenians in Port Said. The camp reported that at least 600 of its residents were fit for the service proposed, but when the call was made no more than forty or fifty would volunteer. It was urged that some measure of compulsion should be applied, at least to the unmarried men of military age. For the space of a year these individuals had eaten and drunk at the expense of the British and Egyptian Governments, and it was right that both should be relieved of the further cost of maintaining in idleness a number of able-bodied men. For their own good also it was desirable to find the latter employment. The lazy life of the camp was exercising terribly demoralizing effects upon their character. But the suggestion did

not find favour. Although Englishmen were accepting conscription, Armenians might not be asked to submit to a lesser and safer ordeal. Their persons apparently were sacred.

But Paris was turning the matter over in mind. Three-cornered discussions, wherein Great Britain, France, and the Kingdom of the Hedjaz were taking part, had been in progress for some months, and the future of Syria and of territories adjacent to that country hung in the balance. In close relation with their fate was that of the province of Cilicia and its tiny seaports Alexandretta and Mersina. In theory the villayets of Mersina and Adana lay outside the spheres of influence claimed respectively by the three parties concerned, but that consideration hardly affected the anxiety common now to each of the three Allies to secure territorial aggrandizement at the expense of Turkey. Germany had convinced herself long ago that wide commercial possibilities existed in Asia Minor, and that belief was infecting her enemies. If the German view had solid foundation, it was clear that the Power in possession of the coastline of Cilicia would be able to exploit the situation to the best advantage. But while plenipotentiaries were arguing and wrangling upon the distribution of territory in Asia as yet unconquered, France conceived an idea which, if developed successfully, could not fail to establish her influence in Cilicia. In that province are dotted about various centres of Armenian life. To penetrate these strongholds, not as conquerors, but as allies of the population, was the French plan. She would raise a national army of Armenians, and at their head march into Cilicia.

In the refugees at Port Said lay an admirable nucleus of such a force. Egypt desired nothing better than to be rid of them; Great Britain had abandoned her intention of utilizing their services:

and lastly, France would be spared the expense and trouble of maintaining the wives and families of her new soldiers. A military Mission was dispatched from Paris to Egypt to organize a *Légion Arménienne*. It was difficult to believe that the Mission would be successful. On the face of it there was no reason to suppose that the refugees would listen to the blandishments of French officers more readily than they hearkened to those of the British. But the unexpected happened. The French Mission triumphed where the Egyptian Expeditionary Force had failed. General Head-quarters thought that they had but to throw the glove, and the Armenians would rush to pick it up. Their judgement was at fault. They had fallen into the national but mistaken belief that psychological considerations may be safely ignored in dealing with Eastern people. One day this conviction will cost Great Britain dearly.

British authority did no more than call for volunteers. 'Accept our offer, or leave it' in effect was the invitation issued to the refugees: and the latter, taking authority at its word, left it. Very differently did Colonel Romieu, the Commandant of the Mission, proceed. He was in no hurry. Day after day, for weeks on end, he spent leisurely moving about the camp, arguing with one refugee, persuading another, that service with the French army was the imperative duty of all Armenians. He had a silvery tongue and an impressive personality. France knew well how to pick men for such delicate work, and Romieu was a fine example of her capacity to do so. To many Englishmen who came into contact with this French officer he seemed to have been born into the world some centuries too late. He would have been an ideal Crusader. No son of France preached more vehemently or more implacably than he the single doctrine of the destruction and damnation of her enemies.

With him was a devoted aide-de-camp, priest by profession, soldier by instinct, one of the many clergy in France who at the first call to arms had abandoned the cassock in favour of the tunic. Precisely how the pair induced all the male refugees of military age, resident in the camp at Port Said, voluntarily to accompany them to Cyprus, remains a riddle. No British mind ever guessed the answer. On Cyprus they proceeded to train their *Légion*. France, noting Romieu's success at Port Said, sounded in every corner of the globe a call for more recruits. Armenians resident in England and the United States heard the appeal and flocked to the standard. She had chosen the moment well. Allenby had started his victorious campaign in Palestine, and Syria and Armenia were stirred by the news. The *Légion Arménienne* grew in strength till its numbers amounted to nearly 4,000 rifles. That the men subsequently misconducted themselves, and the *Légion* eventually was disbanded, cannot rob Romieu of the credit of his astounding achievement. He had succeeded in persuading Armenian refugees to exchange the security and idleness of a camp for the danger and hardship of military service.

Encouraged by the departure to Cyprus of many of the male refugees, the Government looked for excuse to shuffle on to the shoulders of Great Britain the responsibility of maintaining the remaining inmates of the camp. An impression had grown up in the minds of Egyptians by the winter of 1917-18 that their country had undertaken at Port Said the charge of the Armenians in order to extricate England from an embarrassing position. The belief was not entirely accurate. Great Britain had not brought the refugees to Egypt: nor had she done more, in fact, than act as an intermediary between that country and France. But the conquest of Palestine now gave the Egyptian

Government the opportunity which they were seeking. Arising from the military occupation of that country, many thousands of destitute Armenians were crowding into the British lines. General Head-quarters had difficulty enough in feeding the troops: to provide rations for these uninvited guests was impossible, and the Commander-in-Chief urged Egypt to relieve him of their presence. But the Government had had its fill of refugees and the troubles arising from their charge. The Civil Service, weary of the fresh responsibilities which war had brought, were determined to add no more to the number. Their ranks were thinned by the departure of the younger men to the battle-field, and the capacity of sacrifice on the part of the seniors was exhausted. The Government definitely refused the Commander-in-Chief's appeal. The reply surprised General Head-quarters: they could hardly believe that Egypt would fail the Army at this moment. It was not denied that she was within her rights to decline the burden upon financial grounds. Admittedly, the cost of maintaining many thousand men, women, and children, become refugees from the prosecution of a campaign in Palestine, was no legitimate charge against her revenue, and had the Government founded their refusal upon that argument alone, no criticism would have been made. But the decision was not based upon a question of money. The enthusiasm shown so vividly in January 1916, when the Egyptian Government placed all their resources at the disposal of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, two years later had evaporated. In part its disappearance is traceable to the attitude of General Head-quarters, who had come gradually to look upon British members of the Civil Service as so many subordinate staff officers. In the military mind it was for the soldier to order and the civilian to obey, and the almost contemptuous indifference displayed by the Army for

local opinion frequently and justly galled the *amour propre* of the Civil Service. Yet it would have been greatly to the credit of the latter had they accepted the final request of General Head-quarters. With an effort they could have found ways and means to enlarge the camp at Port Said, and thus left the splendid record of the Egyptian Civil Service for war work untarnished to the end.

The Army quickly made their own arrangements. A further 15,000 to 20,000 Armenians were dispatched to the camp. Mesopotamia also was begging the Egyptian Expeditionary Force to take charge of many thousand refugees of this race who had been banished to that inhospitable country. There was horrible confusion at first. Huge parties would reach Port Said long before accommodation could be prepared for their reception. The schools were closed, and industrial work was suspended, in order to give the new-comers shelter. But numbers of delicate women and children lay for many nights under the stars for lack of sleeping accommodation. It may be thought that in these conditions some of the inmates of the camp would now have come forward to assist in the preparations, or voluntarily have surrendered their own tents to the sick. But not a man or woman moved to help their own country-people. It is useless to drive the Armenian or to appeal to his humanity. He has no conception of charity, and unless under the eye of a British soldier he would not do a hand's turn of work at Port Said. Worse was to come: there were murmurs of discontent. Labour would have been the panacea; but the men would not take it, even if employers, warned by experience, had been willing now to offer it.

At this critical moment in the life of the camp, a Red Cross unit, equipped by the United States to repair the ravages of war in Palestine and Syria,



unexpectedly disembarked at Port Said. Syria was still in the hands of the enemy, and Palestine was recovering rapidly from the strain of the past few years. It was plain, therefore, that this unit would be unable to employ, for the moment, all its resources upon the work of reconstruction, and the commandant, who in common with many Americans was interested in Armenian welfare, during his stay in Port Said studied the conditions of the camp. To his practised eye the first requirement was occupation for the inmates. Even the work of the women now languished. The little band of workers formed from the Society of Friends of Armenia had vanished at the call of other duties, and none had come to fill their place. Here then, at Port Said, was an opportunity for America to begin the task of reconstructing the Near East. The camp industries were resuscitated and enlarged. Fresh schools were built and fresh hospitals opened.

There could be no question of the earnest sincerity of the members of this Red Cross unit. They were men and women drawn to the Egyptian theatre of war out of simple charity. No thought of honours or decorations had induced them to undertake the long and hazardous journey from the United States: no motive had inspired them but devotion to the cause of afflicted humanity. In their ranks were men of all callings and all creeds: true Christian citizens of the world, parading neither their aims nor their faiths. Their interest was excited by suffering: their generosity knew no bounds. It was a wonderfully equipped Mission, astounding in the wealth of its resources, even in the eyes of those well accustomed now to the spectacle of lavish expenditure of money upon soldiers: disciplined also with a strictness to satisfy the most exacting martinet. To troops weary of talk and thought of slaughter, there was relief in meeting a body of men and women who desired to repair the ravages of war.

## IX

### EGYPT IN 1915

THROUGHOUT the summer and autumn of 1915 the temper of Egypt on the surface remained unruffled. The tide of war had flowed into her territory and had receded, leaving no trace of the visit, and the failure of British troops to penetrate the Turkish defence of Gallipoli did not disturb the tranquillity of the country. The calmness of the population was due to many causes. Underneath a fixed determination to avoid any expression of opinion which would produce conflict with the military authorities, there had come at last a truer perception of England's military strength and resources. Added to this knowledge was a feeling of thankfulness that martial law had involved no interference with the course of national life. Contrary to their anticipation, Egyptians had suffered little personal inconvenience from a state of war. Every individual was free to move about the country as he wished: food was abundant: life and property were safe: and the ordinary processes of the civil administration had undergone no change. Of the two new factors introduced, the first, the accession of Prince Hussein Kamil to the throne, was popular with most classes of the community, and the second, the appointment by Great Britain of a High Commissioner, had passed almost unremarked. If the nomination of the latter attracted discussion among Egyptians, the point was dismissed as a war measure, and devoid of future political significance. This conviction received support from the fact that His Majesty's Government, by accident or by design, did not define the duties and responsibilities attached to the new office. Generally

of martial law in Egypt during 1915 it may be said that the assurance given on its declaration had been honourably kept. When use had been made of the instrument, it was with the intention of supplementing and not superseding the ordinary law of the land. A glance through the Orders imposed under its authority will confirm the truth of that assertion. Some of the proclamations were framed entirely in the interests of Egyptians : others pursued more indirectly a similar aim.

If Egyptians at this early period of the War suffered nothing from their subjection to martial law, some of the less reputable Europeans had good reason to regret the rule : in particular, individuals who were concerned in the exploitation of the liquor trade. For some years the Government had been exercised by the growing appetite of the population for alcohol. Drink had become a recognized form of pleasure to many Egyptians resident in Cairo or Alexandria, and alarm was expressed lest the habit, with its inevitable consequence upon a primitive people, should spread from the towns to the country. In the first the Government, tied by the Capitulations, were powerless to check the mischief : in the second they had a more encouraging field for action. It was possible there to restrict administratively the number of permits authorizing the holders to sell alcohol, and arrest the danger of a sober people becoming afflicted with the craving for drink.<sup>1</sup> But in the European quarters of the towns a foreigner, privileged by the Capitulations, was in a position to obtain a licence without difficulty, and his licence could be withdrawn only by an order

<sup>1</sup> As long ago as 1891 the Egyptian Government forbade the sale of alcoholic liquor in villages with a population of less than 3,000 souls. But the order was negligently carried out, and in 1905 the Ministry of Interior itself became the issuing authority of permits in villages.

from the Mixed Tribunals. In charges which concern the sale or attempted sale of adulterated liquor, it is not always easy for the Egyptian police to satisfy the court of the truth of the accusation. The police may not enter a licensed house owned by a foreigner unless consular authority to do so has been previously obtained, and the incriminating evidence frequently is safely hidden before the police make their visit. On the rare occasions when raids upon the drink-shops are successful, many months elapse before the tribunals order the establishments to close. During that period their proprietors continue to trade without let or hindrance from the police. The penalty, also, inflicted upon the guilty is ridiculously inadequate. Of what account is a fine of £1, or a term of simple imprisonment of seven days, to a European engaged in this profitable business? Little wonder, in these conditions, if the practice of adulterating the liquor sold under the name of spirits flourishes exceedingly.<sup>1</sup> The newly raised levies of Great Britain and the Dominions fell easy victims to the vile stuff sold in Egypt as whisky, gin, and so on. The Egyptian Government was powerless to stop the abuse, and General Maxwell issued the first of the many proclamations which referred to the subject of drink.<sup>2</sup> The proclamation cut at the root of the problem by authorizing the Egyptian police, irrespective of consular authority, to enter public bars and houses situated in the Governorates of Cairo, Alexandria, and the Suez Canal where alcohol was sold. If the liquor seized proved on

<sup>1</sup> Lord Cromer in his Reports frequently drew attention to the difficulties which met the Egyptian Government in their efforts to control the trade. In the 1908 Report he states that there existed in Cairo alone 43 distilleries, 13 maintained by Egyptians and the remainder by foreign subjects. Six years later the total number had doubled. The alcohol was distilled from molasses and flavoured with filthy essences.

<sup>2</sup> Proclamation dated 18th March 1915.

analysis to be adulterated, the vendor now became liable to a fine of £100 or a term of six months' imprisonment. These substantial penalties inspired salutary respect. There were no half measures about Maxwell's proclamations. When he struck, he did so without mercy to vested interests. By a stroke of the pen he destroyed trade in absinthe. The prohibition was absolute: from the 29th March no person might sell or have in his possession this form of poison.<sup>1</sup> The measure was conceived entirely to protect Egyptians from temptation. The taste for absinthe was growing in the country, and many public-spirited men openly deplored the habit. Their protest had been unavailing: commercial treaties and Capitulations hampered the endeavour of the Government to control the import and manufacture of all forms of alcohol.

All elements of respectable society applauded the proclamations. It was high time that some step was taken to restrain the wholesale adulteration of liquor so prevalent in Egypt. Quantities of alcohol sold falsely under well-known trade-marks were seized now by the police, and proved upon analysis to have nothing in common with the brand but the name. Some of the stuff offered for sale in low-class bars was so vile that it is incredible how any human stomach could assimilate it. Nor, in fact, did normal organs do so. Violent vomiting would take place on swallowing a glass of the liquid, followed by the collapse of the drinker: symptoms which would lead the latter to declare that he had been drugged.

But the most signal instance of how martial law was bent to serve Egyptian interests was the proclamation which henceforth obliged every foreigner to bear a share of the cost of maintenance of the Ghafir Force. Hitherto, the incidence of this tax had fallen solely and unfairly upon Egyptians. In towns the uniformed

<sup>1</sup> Proclamation dated 29th March 1915.

police are withdrawn at sundown and replaced by Ghafirs, or watchmen, armed with staves : an archaic force, suggestive of bygone days, when no good citizen was out of doors after nightfall. In the country districts, security day and night is assured only through the agency of Ghafirs. Egyptians have always accounted it to be an intolerable hardship that foreigners under the Capitulations escape payment of this local tax. Especially was this feeling prevalent in the towns, where numbers of Ghafirs are diverted nightly to protect the European quarters at the expense of the Egyptian. Dissatisfaction was the more aggravated since no one complained more loudly and more publicly of the inefficiency of the Ghafirs than the European householder, who contributed nothing to their support. In Cairo the total sum collected fell short of the expenditure upon the force, and the State was compelled to meet the deficiency from sources of national revenue. People occupying privileged positions are ill advised to insist too emphatically upon their legal rights in matters of small importance, and it is a fact that much of the irritation felt by Egyptians towards the Capitulations has arisen from the flat refusal of many members of the European community to contribute towards the Ghafir tax. The tax itself is so trifling that it is often a source of wonder how a self-respecting European can be guilty of the meanness of evading it. Of all measures under martial law, none excited so universal respect among Egyptians for Maxwell's sense of justice, as an Order which directed that every inhabitant of Egypt, irrespective of nationality, should bear his fair share of the burden of the Ghafir Force, so long as the War lasted.<sup>1</sup>

Of greater importance to the fortunes of the Allied cause than the solution of domestic difficulties was the issue at various dates of a series of proclamations

<sup>1</sup> Proclamation dated 23rd September 1915.

establishing conditions of trading with persons resident in enemy territory. By their decision, signed on the 5th August 1914, the Council of Ministers had forbidden the inhabitants of Egypt to transact business with the enemy Powers. But the interdiction was purely formal; for the Egyptian Government had no means at that moment of enforcing obedience to their own orders. The declaration of martial law on the 22nd November removed that impediment, and permitted, later, the issue to the public of definite instructions upon the subject.<sup>1</sup> But no satisfactory explanation, or excuse, of the prolonged delay in the publication of the conditions has yet been forthcoming. The responsibility rests upon the Egyptian Government, inasmuch as it was their duty and not that of the Army to regulate business of this description. A military commander has neither the time nor the knowledge to master the intricacies of trade, or to devise machinery with the object of controlling commercial operations in time of war. The Egyptian Government were justified in taking time to consider the procedure; but to require six months to formulate a few simple regulations speaks little either for the imagination or the energy of those members of the Civil Service responsible for the task. During the autumn and winter months of 1914 the Allies had hardly grasped the significant connexion between trade and war. Governments were stumbling blindly in search of a policy which would strangle the enemy's commerce without exciting the anger of neutral nations, and it is reasonable to believe that Egypt awaited instructions from Great Britain before herself taking definite steps to ensure obedience to the formal prohibition contained in the decision of the Council of Ministers.<sup>2</sup> Yet when due allowance has

<sup>1</sup> Proclamation dated 23rd January 1915.

<sup>2</sup> The first three articles of the decision dealt with the point.

been made for these considerations, the excuse is hardly sufficient to explain why nearly six months were permitted to elapse before publication of a definite procedure.<sup>1</sup>

But the lucidity and common sense of the provisions of the proclamation of the 23rd January 1915 were rightly applauded. The document was written for the general public, and admirably fulfilled that aim. Controllers would be appointed to supervise the business of Egyptian branches of firms and companies situated in enemy territory. Of little less importance was the control of the properties of individuals residing in such territory. Here receivers took charge of the interests of the respective owners. Among the first estates to be administered under this arrangement were those of His Highness the Khedive and various members of his family: princes who at the outbreak of war had not returned to Egypt. While the procedure stated in the proclamation worked smoothly and equitably, experience soon showed that some of the provisions required amendment. It was doubtful, for example, whether hasty and compulsory liquidation of every enemy or suspected enemy firm in Egypt could be in the best interests of the Allies. There

No. 1 forbids entering into any contract with an enemy Government or its agents. No. 2 forbids undertaking insurance for losses suffered by the enemy in consequence of war; and No. 3 forbids any description of business transaction ('aucune personne résidant ou de passage en Égypte ne pourra conclure de nouveau contrat, ou obligation de nature commerciale, financière, ou autre, avec une personne, ou au profit d'une personne, résidant ou de passage dans le pays ci-dessus visé').

<sup>1</sup> The Egyptian Government appeared to favour the plan of dealing piecemeal with cases, according to their urgency. Thus, on the 26th October 1914, the Council of Ministers gave their opinion upon a number of obscure points which had arisen in connexion with insurance business. Again, a belated announcement (dated 27th January 1915) in the Official Journal notified the public that a Controller from the 15th November 1914 had been in charge of the Egyptian Branch of the Deutsche Orient-Bank.



were powerful reasons, on the contrary, which suggested in certain cases that conditional permission to continue to trade should be granted. In other words it was desirable that the Egyptian Government introduced some system of license. No less obvious was the fact that the close supervision of enemy trading would become a business of vast importance, and that qualified persons should be responsible for its conduct. Intricate problems connected with finance and commerce necessarily must arise, complexities which required the attention of minds experienced in business, and military authority was fortunate in persuading the Financial Adviser of the Egyptian Government to become the first Chief Licensing Officer.<sup>1</sup>

Under a second proclamation,<sup>2</sup> licences were divided into three classes. The holders of A were permitted to trade in Egypt without restriction : of B, with the British Empire and the Allies of Great Britain : while firms under C continued in business only for the purpose of liquidation. Within the space of a few months exhaustive inquiry had been made into the antecedents of more than 350 trading corporations, which from one reason or another had fallen under suspicion.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lord Edward Cecil, K.C.M.G., undertook the onerous duties of the post.

<sup>2</sup> Dated 16th August 1915, and designed to secure 'the better control of trading in Egypt by, or on behalf of, persons of enemy nationality'.

<sup>3</sup> The first list of holders of licences was published on the 16th January 1916. At that date five firms only had satisfied the conditions prescribed by the Licensing Officer as necessary for holders of an A licence ; but 250 were granted a B licence. The list, however, was imperfect. There were obvious omissions, due presumably to hurried methods of investigation, and there were curious errors of judgement in the choice of some of the liquidators of firms under C licences. Thus, the good faith of the Vulcan Coaling Agency, established at Port Said, apparently had not been questioned. While it is true the nominal head-quarters of this concern were situated in neutral territory, evidence had been secured locally which suggested

The War Trade Department, an office created by the Egyptian Government to control trading in Egypt by, or on behalf of, persons of enemy nationality, throughout its existence did admirable service to the Empire, particularly during the early stages of the War. Later, the work of the Department grew more formal. The principles of control had been defined, and their application was relatively simple. But in 1915 conditions were very different. There were no precedents and no standard authorities to consult. Difficulties, also, special to Egypt, presented themselves. Profession of loyalty towards the Allies from some members of the Levantine colony had to be received with reserve: for in Egypt it does not follow that families enjoying European protection are in sympathy with the views of their adopted country. As the War dragged on, the Army withdrew from active partici-

that the control of the business rested in the hands of Herr Thyssen, a coal magnate of Germany. The conduct of the local manager tended to confirm that impression. Altogether, on a good many grounds the agency in question was suspect. An inquiry undertaken by the Licensing Officer's staff disclosed nothing incriminatory. But the naval and military authorities in the Port Said area were reluctant to accept that conclusion as final, and their joint protest led the Chief Licensing Officer to invite them to make a second investigation. Its result substantiated their suspicions, and the Vulcan Agency went into compulsory liquidation.

The same authorities took exception also to the appointment, as liquidator of the *Deutsches Kohlen-Dépôt*, of the acting manager. The fact of his neutral nationality, they argued, would not prevent this gentleman from performing his obvious duty towards the parent company in Germany, so long as he remained its paid servant. He had been sent to Port Said in August 1914 to keep alive, if possible, the *dépôt*, and as liquidator he would be in an admirable position to do so. Every day brought the War a step nearer its conclusion, and the longer the liquidator could delay the sale of the plant the more likely he would be to achieve his aim. The appointment of the D.K.D.'s own paid servant as liquidator appeared, in fact, to defeat the object of the Licensing Officer. The criticism was admitted to be substantial, and the manager of a British business house concluded the business of liquidation.

pation in war trade business, and permitted continuity of policy to be sustained. Thus the Department carried on its duties, indifferent to changes of commanders-in-chief or of their staffs. Little escaped attention. Proclamation succeeded proclamation, each distinguished by the clarity of expression and the common sense of the first.<sup>1</sup> Of the many side issues of the War, whereof the Egyptian Government bore the burden, none was conducted more intelligently and more successfully than the control of enemy trading. The credit is rightly due to the Financial Adviser and a small band of officials in the service of the Egyptian Government. He and his colleagues hardly received the public recognition which their capacity and enthusiasm for the task rightly deserved.

Among the more interesting concerns which fell under the ban of the Army was the Egyptian Red Crescent Society. This institution, modelled upon the lines of the Red Cross, had come into being in the last Balkan War. A considerable sum of money was collected then to provide a military hospital in Constantinople, and a well-equipped medical unit had left Egypt for that purpose. No sooner was the hospital established than its staff came to loggerheads with the Turkish medical service, and the Red Crescent's work at Constantinople hardly justified the expenditure lavished upon it. But a skeleton organization had been maintained, and the arrival in Cairo from the Suez Canal of wounded and sick Turkish prisoners of war spurred the society into fresh activity.

<sup>1</sup> The proclamation of 25th November 1915, closing the Egyptian stock and security market to the enemy, is a good illustration. From that date no business could be transacted in the market unless a responsible third party guaranteed that the stock or security in question had been in the physical possession of the holder before the 5th August 1914 in Egypt, in the British Empire, or in a country an ally of Great Britain.

Egyptians in sympathy with the misfortunes of their co-religionists urged the Red Crescent to attend to these unfortunates. Educated opinion contrasted the magnificent efforts of Great Britain and France in raising fresh Red Cross units with the apathy displayed in Egypt. The protest was successful in so far as the Red Crescent opened a hospital for the reception of wounded prisoners of war. But the administration did not satisfy every subscriber, and a belief grew up that the revenue of the Red Crescent might be well spent to greater advantage. General Maxwell took the bull by the horns. He appointed His Highness Prince Ahmed Fuad<sup>1</sup> as Sequestrator and Administrator of the Society, investing him with powers to apply the funds to the maintenance of a hospital or to any other undertaking which seemed desirable. In part the troubles had arisen from the persistent meddling of certain influential persons with the technical side of the work of the hospital. Interference of this nature inevitably ends in the impairing of medical efficiency, and General Maxwell was determined to have no repetition of the mismanagement. In appointing a new advisory committee he gave that body firmly to understand that the medical administration of the Red Crescent was now outside their province. To make this point clearer, the committee, in case of doubt, were required to refer to the Director of the Egyptian Government Hospital in Cairo, and should that official disagree with their view, to General Maxwell himself. To the credit of the Sequestrator and the committee, it must be added that the arbiter was never called upon to act.

There were instances when this curious condominium, or partnership, between the Army and the Civil Administration for the better government of Egypt worked less happily. The misfortune of such

<sup>1</sup> Later, His Majesty King of Egypt.

unions springs from a belief in the mind of each authority that some particular duty is the duty of the other. Except upon that assumption, it is not easy to explain the reprehensible laxity which governed the landing of persons in Egypt during the first fourteen months of the War. Egypt had been placed in a state of siege, and the enemy was in military occupation of Sinai, a part of her territory. If any nation apparently was justified in refusing hospitality to strangers unprovided with credentials to establish their identity, it was she. Yet until the issue, by the Ministry of Interior on the 7th October 1915, of a notice requiring all persons landing in Egypt to be in possession of British passports, or passports bearing the *visa* of a British consul, there was nothing to prevent enemy subjects in possession of passports issued by a neutral country from disembarking and travelling in Egypt without let or hindrance. The police, powerless to interfere on their own initiative, in the Canal Zone were driven at times to invoke assistance from the local military authority. The latter, in turn, was puzzled to distinguish the occasions which justified interference. Many and urgent were the warnings addressed to Cairo of the danger which arose from the complete freedom accorded to passengers to land in the country. The Army was the first to move in the matter, and it would have been well had this authority set its own house in order months before. The Canal Zone was a war area; yet not until the 21st September 1915 were passengers off vessels forbidden to land at Port Said and Suez unless they were of British or Allied nationalities. Three weeks later the Ministry of Interior issued the notice of the 7th October.

It must be said of this subject that neither the Army nor the Egyptian Government displayed much intelligence and foresight. It would have been reasonable to give to travellers proposing to land in Egypt a

sufficient period of grace to obtain passports ; reasonable even to invest the responsible police with power during the first few months of war to decide all points connected with the landing of passengers in Egypt. But to allow fourteen months to elapse before closing the country to all persons unable to establish their goodwill towards the Allies speaks little for the imagination of either authority. Who should or who should not enter a territory placed in a state of war, no doubt is primarily the business of the commander of the garrison, but the measures to be taken to secure fulfilment of his instructions plainly lie in the province of the Civil Government. In this instance the commander did not indicate his wishes, and the Egyptian Government did not ask them. Yet the chief blame for the delay rests upon the second. The task of defending Egypt fell equally upon the two authorities. It was the duty of the Army to repel armed invasion, and of the Government to provide for the internal security. Nothing in time of war affected more the maintenance of that security in Egypt than adequate supervision of persons entering her territory. It was not enough for many months to leave responsibility to the subordinate civil authority at each seaport or to trust to arbitrary decisions given under martial law. Such procedure was fair neither to the commander of the military forces nor to individuals affected by the application.

If the number of decrees issued in 1915 upon the subject is accepted as an indication, it is fair to presume that the chief preoccupation of the Council of Ministers during the year was the food-supply of the nation. But there was little in their decisions to suggest that the Government had profited from a period of reflection : less to show that they had fixed upon a definite policy. It is true that some of the earlier and useless restrictions upon export, particularly

export of produce recognized to be in excess of local consumption, were withdrawn. It had been perceived, for example, that the food-supply of the nation was unlikely to be endangered by permitting the export of caramels<sup>1</sup> or of bananas and other fruits grown primarily for the foreign market. Equally the Ministers were entitled to claim, from their legislation of the previous autumn, that the national requirements of cereals in 1915-16 were now assured. The restriction imposed upon planting of cotton automatically had released a large area for cereal production.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> In the early days of the War it was gravely asserted that caramels were articles of prime necessity. Not until 5th January 1915 did the Government withdraw restrictions upon their export.

<sup>2</sup> Wheat and other food-stuffs (except maize) are sown in the early months of winter and harvested in the following spring. The maize crop is harvested in December. Cotton is planted in February and picked in August and September.

The figures given below will be of interest.

Areas (in feddans, 1 feddan being equal to 1.08 acres) under maize, wheat, barley, and beans respectively were as follows :

<i>Crop Year (harvested) in</i>	<i>Maize.</i>	<i>Wheat.</i>	<i>Barley.</i>	<i>Beans.</i>
1913	1,687,000	1,305,000	369,000	478,000
1914	1,820,000	1,253,000	383,000	428,000
1915	1,777,000	1,534,000	446,000	623,000
1916	1,675,000	1,394,000	423,000	503,000
1917	1,623,000	1,076,000	428,000	472,000
1918	1,745,000	1,239,000	324,000	476,000

Yields (in metric tons per feddan) were estimated as follows :

	<i>Maize.</i>	<i>Wheat.</i>	<i>Barley.</i>	<i>Beans.</i>
1913	0.886	0.787	0.703	0.857
1914	1.002	0.713	0.629	0.683
1915	1.037	0.694	0.672	0.692
1916	0.974	0.713	0.679	0.620
1917	1.001	0.755	0.692	0.702
1918	0.953	0.706	0.681	0.733

Cotton production undoubtedly had entailed a reduction in that of all cereals, especially maize and wheat. Egypt in 1913 imported no less than 260,000 tons of wheat to meet her deficiency of this crop.

yields of wheat, barley, and beans were a little below the average; but in compensation it was known that a bumper crop of maize was probable at the end of the year. Nor was this all the good fortune which Egypt enjoyed at this critical moment: she had harvested in the previous December almost equally as large a crop. Thus it was fair to assume that considerable stocks of the 1914 crop of maize would be carried over into 1916. But the future was uncertain. The Government had no right to anticipate similar conditions in the following season, and prudence suggested that the Egyptian Cabinet should frame their future policy upon that basis. In short, if there was reason to believe that the maize production of 1915 would exceed probable consumption, the surplus should have been held in reserve as provision against possible deficiencies later. The same consideration applied even more forcibly to wheat: for the yield in 1915 was disappointing. To safeguard, therefore, the country's future supply of food, the Government would have been well advised to maintain existing restrictions, firstly, over the export of wheat, maize, and beans, and secondly, over the areas to be planted with cotton in 1916. The Council of Ministers decided otherwise, and withdrew the restrictions in both instances.

No decision demonstrates more conclusively the

Increasing prosperity also was a contributory cause, since every one was substituting wheaten flour for flour milled from maize. The standard of living, in fact, was rising throughout Egypt. Even the fellah was affected by the movement. In the past he had eaten bread made entirely of maize flour. He now mixed a proportion of wheaten flour with the maize. In the towns the tendency was still more marked, and even the humblest refused bread made wholly of maize. The War checked the taste, and people were forced by circumstance to consume maize. It is too early yet to perceive if reversion to maize has affected the health of the country.



incapacity of Egyptians to resist pressure. In place of refusing firmly to sacrifice the mass of consumers, the Ministers gave way without compunction to clamour from the producers. Large landowners themselves, their sympathies naturally lay with the latter. Already there had been signs of a struggle between that feeling of sympathy and a sentiment of duty towards the nation. Within a few days of the issue of the decree limiting the planting of cotton in 1915, the Council had amended the measure in favour of the producer.<sup>1</sup> Now they beat a retreat all along the line. On the 20th April 1915 the export of maize and of beans was authorized, and on the 9th June that of wheat. If the Ministers had hoped that agricultural resentment would die away in face of these concessions they were disappointed. There was little reason why cultivators should accept the gift as even part payment of the inconvenience which the interference of the Government in the business of production was causing. No profit at that moment was likely to be derived by selling Egyptian cereals in foreign rather than in the home markets, where, broadly speaking, the world's prices still governed local tariffs, and even if the price of wheat abroad was slightly in favour of the Egyptian grower, the latter would be unable to sell to advantage so long as Argentina, Canada, and Australia could supply the foreign buyer with higher grade produce. On the other hand, Egypt grows cotton of a quality and type which no other country can match, and the market was slowly but steadily recovering from the stagnation which had overtaken it in the preceding

<sup>1</sup> The first decree, dated 22nd September 1914, had limited cotton planted in 1915 to an area of one million of feddans, individual agriculturists being forbidden to devote more than one-fourth of their cultivable land to production of the crop. On the 30th October a second decree was published, modifying the original measure. Individual agriculturists were authorized now to plant up to one-third of their holdings.

autumn. The agriculturist, keenly alive to the upward movement of prices, clamoured loudly to be relieved from legislation which restricted his output, and the Council of Ministers gave way.<sup>1</sup>

Great Britain had made no attempt to influence the decision of the Council. Greatly as they desired to be assured of constant and adequate supplies of raw cotton, His Majesty's Government were not prepared, as a price, to guarantee Egypt's food for the duration of the War. Some half-hearted suggestions made from Cairo to London to that effect met with no success. Great Britain would not add to her existing responsibilities. She was deaf to the threat that Egypt, unless her cereal requirements were safeguarded, in self-defence must continue to restrict the production of cotton, and equally deaf to a more subtle suggestion that a guarantee of the nature desired would be a practical method of convincing Egyptians of the value of British protection. On the contrary, England genuinely believed that Egypt, by the exercise of foresight, should be able not only to feed her population, but also to supply the United Kingdom with the latter's requirements of cotton. Politicians who maintained that the primary duty of the Empire at this moment was to increase food production did not dissent from that view: while those more intent upon securing raw material for the factories of the mother country were indifferent to Egypt's food problems. It would be unfair to accuse responsible authority in England of the same lack of interest, or to accuse it of the erroneous belief that Egypt had at her disposal tracts of virgin soil capable of being put under emergency cultivation. None the less a vague impression was created that the Egyptian Government were giving no assistance to Great Britain. The view was quite incorrect: for unconsciously the Council of

<sup>1</sup> Decree dated 20th September 1915.

profit from the situation, held up stocks until the alarmed consumer paid the price fixed by the seller. The Government had no means of stopping the practice, and in perplexity turned to the Army. The appeal was not made in vain. Under a proclamation dated 16th August 1915 it was forbidden to accumulate or illicitly to export food supplies. Disobedience entailed the seizure and sale of the supplies.

If the issue of this proclamation frightened the more timid hoarders into releasing part of their stocks, it was far from eradicating the whole evil. Curiously enough, the Army was among the first to feel the pinch arising from speculation in food-stuffs, and the supply services were unable to obtain their forage requirements except at absurdly inflated prices. It is true that the needs of the Army in Egypt in the autumn of 1915 were very different from those of the pre-war garrison. Where the latter numbered the troops and animals in hundreds, there were now as many thousands. But this increase of strength was not the real cause of the difficulties of the Army at this moment. They sprang from a genuine belief among traders that the military services were in their hands. Contractors, in fact, proposed to squeeze the Army dry. Steps thereupon were taken to put the purchasers in direct communication with the producers. Large quantities of dries, or Egyptian hay, were the immediate requirements, and the Egyptian Government undertook to act as the agents of the Army. This arrangement had nothing in common with the measures adopted two years later to obtain supplies, when what the military supply officer required, he took. On this occasion the agriculturist neither was forced to sell dries nor threatened with pains and penalties if he did not desire to do so. Timely co-operation between the Army and the Ministry of Agriculture secured the desired result. No more was done by that

Ministry in 1915 than to fix fair prices, to appoint buying agents, and finally to remind cultivators of the existence of restrictions upon the export of Egyptian hay. The warning was sufficient, and there was no need to use harsher methods. The producer, sensible of the implication, released his stocks, and the Army obtained supplies without recourse to requisition. Unfortunately, the forbearance of General Maxwell was not pursued in the later stages of the War. Had the Egyptian Government once and for all become the responsible authority for the purchase and collection of all food and fodder requirements of the Army in Egypt, one of the causes which led to the outbreak of trouble in 1919 would not have existed.

But a matter more personal than the food-supply of the Army was also claiming the attention of the rulers of Egypt, and the succession of murderous attacks upon the person of the Sovereign and of individual Ministers should have warned authority that some elements of society had not acquiesced in the general submission. There is no reason to suppose that the campaign of assassination received support from the public, or was inspired by men of reputation and influence. Nor was evidence forthcoming to indicate the existence of widespread conspiracy, or that adult Egyptians sympathized with the criminals. It is fair, therefore, to assume that the projected assassination of the Sultan and Ministers in 1915 was the work of a few unbalanced youths, who saw, in the accession of Prince Hussein to the throne and the acceptance of office by Ministers, acts of treachery to Egypt. And the assaults might be dismissed from consideration, had not unhappily the students of the colleges and high schools maintained by the Government looked approvingly upon the aim of the assassins, and secretly extolled them as national heroes. Since Mustapha Kamel, ten years before, had sown the seed

of indiscipline in the schools, the crop had ripened. Few Egyptian students now discussed any topic but the political enslavement of their country. Every Englishman in the service of the Government they regarded as an intruder and usurper of authority: their class masters most of all. The Ministry of Education watched the deterioration of discipline with apparent unconcern. Every aspect of school life was subordinated to the claims of the final examination, and the formation of character counted for little in the programme of the Ministry. It is difficult to conceive a system of education less adapted to produce good citizens than that pursued in Egypt. All power and all initiative were in the hands of the Central Ministry.<sup>1</sup> Head masters had little authority either over discipline or over instruction. If a boy misconducted himself he was reported to the Ministry, which judged the enormity of the offence and determined the penalty. In school work no deviation from the programme laid down by the Ministry was allowed. Outside the classroom the assistant masters had no intercourse with their pupils. They heard the lessons and then went their several ways. What the Egyptian boy thought or did outside the precincts of the schoolroom was not their business. On the whole it cannot be said that the conduct of education has been a triumphant success of the British Occupation. Even the material results, as judged from the examinations, were no more than moderate.<sup>2</sup> It is true that the responsible

<sup>1</sup> The late Inspector-General of the Ministry of Education, in a pamphlet entitled, 'Suggestions for improvement of education in Egypt', published in August 1919, in view of an approaching investigation into the main causes of Egyptian discontent, lay stress upon this point. The passage (p. 21) is too long to quote; but the author of the suggestions has no doubt in his own mind that undue centralization is one of the most notable defects of the Ministry of Education.

<sup>2</sup> The harshest indictment comes from the pen of a senior official of the Ministry. In his report on the Secondary Education Certificate

Ministry always has been the Cinderella of the Government, that is to say, when economy of expenditure is called for, the Educational Budget is the first to suffer.<sup>1</sup> But were its estimates met in full, there is no reason to suppose that the school discipline would have been much different. More inspectors would have been created and the centralization of authority would have become more marked. The Egyptian student leaves school with a certificate which enables him to obtain employment under the Government; but he has little else to help him through life: no desire for knowledge, and no character. Blind to Egyptian dissatisfaction with the inadequate education provided for the country, the Ministry made no attempt to

Examination, Part I and II of 1918, the General President of the Board of Examiners summarizes the views of the examiners as follows: 'It will be seen from the above reports that the examiners, as a body, are but ill content with the general results of the examination. In one subject only is there any satisfactory improvement, and that is in the Arabic language. While it is a matter for congratulation that any subject escapes the general condemnation, improvement in this can hardly be regarded as typical of the general tendency. All the Examiners' reports point to one main conclusion. The candidates rely on their memory rather than on their intelligence. They produce what they remember, and content themselves with the repetition of phrases and facts which are often ludicrously inappropriate. In Arabic or in English the theme of the Essay is ignored, and a subject which has done duty in the classroom and has been committed to memory is substituted. . . . In fact the root of the evil, so far as the mental qualifications of the candidate are concerned, is their general failure to exercise their common sense.'

<sup>1</sup> The Egyptian Treasury looks coldly upon education. During the period extending from 1907 to 1920 the percentage of the National Budget allotted to the Ministry of Education was never higher than 3·4 (in 1912), and fell as low as 2·3 (in 1917): and of the percentages, from one-third to one-half came from fees paid by the students. Considering that during the same period the revenue of the country advanced from £14,240,000 to £40,270,000, the provisions cannot be called liberal, and contrasts poorly with the contribution of the State towards education in other countries. Thus, Portugal, a backward nation, devotes 6 per cent. of her national income to public instruction, and India 4 per cent.

supplement local facilities by sending batches of promising pupils to Europe to study under more liberal conditions. A few youths, intended for the teaching profession, went to England from time to time; but nothing else was done, and Egyptians, ambitious of acquiring more knowledge than their own colleges and schools could offer, departed for a course of instruction in Europe at their own expense, if they went at all.

The Ministry of Education did not altogether approve of this practice, since in theory that authority professed to provide the youth of Egypt with adequate instruction in all branches of learning; and unquestionably at one period of the Occupation many of the junior masters in the schools had gained distinction at the University. But these Englishmen had accepted appointments in the Egyptian Educational Service as stepping-stones to more congenial work in other Ministries. To attract candidates by methods of indirect bribery of this type cannot be sound policy in the long run; but from the system the Ministry did at least secure temporarily a number of able young men. The inducement disappeared once Lord Cromer decided to fill administrative posts open to Englishmen by direct selection from the Universities. There was then no place for the outsider in appointments of this nature. The wretched rates of pay and poor prospects of promotion of the Ministry of Education could not now tempt the class of candidate it had secured in the past. The profession of teaching in Egypt offered so few attractions as a permanent career that inevitably there was a decline in the intellectual quality of the English assistant masters. No boy is quicker to recognize a change for the worse than the Egyptian, and no boy quicker to take advantage of it. War also had affected the discipline. Some of the best of the younger Englishmen in the

Educational Service at once left to join the Army. It would be unjust to criticize them for that action. Unlike their fellow countrymen in the other branches of the Civil Service, they had little reason to study the convenience of an employer who treated them so parsimoniously.

The Egyptian student, emotional and impulsive as a child, had become absorbed in politics. No one proclaimed his patriotism more loudly than he, and no one criticized more fiercely the friendly relations which the Sultan and the Ministers maintained with the representatives of Great Britain. He openly denounced his rulers as the betrayers of their country. Unfortunately there was no authority to give him a truer understanding of the situation. His class-master was there to teach the syllabus of the Ministry of Education, not to talk of subjects outside that programme: his parents ignored the truth, or were as unconscious of it as their offspring: the Press, closely muzzled between orders issued by the Army and instructions given by the Civil Administration, had ceased to guide public opinion:<sup>1</sup> and members of the Legislative Assembly, from the permanent adjournment of the Chamber, had no opportunity of eliciting the facts. In these conditions each college and school became an arena where older students without remonstrance harangued the younger upon the treachery of their Government towards Egypt. The Ministry of Education, short of staff and hampered by centralization, could not combat the evil. The Council of Ministers, perhaps unaware of the extent of the propaganda, made no move: and since

<sup>1</sup> Its methods were the subject of severe and not always unjust criticism. *The Times* defined the Egyptian censorship as 'the most incompetent, the most inept, and the most savagely ruthless in any country under British control, not excepting Mesopotamia'. It may be added that the control of the censorship was vested in the hands of the Egyptian Government.



nothing angers Young Egypt more than failure to impress authority, the speech of the students daily became more bitter and more truculent. Doubtless the vast majority had no intention of translating their words into action. None the less there was danger in the loose talk which went on. The atmosphere of the cafés and clubs where students congregated, became charged with the doctrines preached in the classrooms. In more advanced countries it would have been safe to pass in silence the follies of youth ; but in Egypt rash words exercise effects altogether disproportionate to the intelligence and the ages of the speakers. Presently some of the more recent graduates from the colleges caught the infection. In all societies of which indisciplined youth is the predominant partner, and where a single political idea unites the members, there are to be found a few extremists. Egypt was no exception. Misguided creatures, twisted in intellect and excited by vague catchwords and phrases, saw in the persons of the Sovereign and his Ministers the obstacles which stood between Egypt and complete independence. These obstacles they determined to remove by death. Thus began the campaign of political assassination which continues to this day to stain the fair name of Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Two attempts were made to murder His Highness ; both failed to accomplish the design. On the 9th April the Sultan was attacked when driving through Cairo. The assassin was arrested, tried by a Military Court, and executed. Three months later to a day, a second attempt was made in Alexandria. On this occasion the criminal got away. On the 10th August the Prime Minister narrowly escaped death. After the Armistice a number of officers and men of the Army were shot in the streets of Cairo, and these crimes were followed by a systematic campaign of murder of Englishmen in the service of the Egyptian Government.

## X

### THE ARMY AND THE CIVIL ADMINISTRATION

THE decision of His Majesty's Government to withdraw the Army from Gallipoli released the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force for employment in other theatres of war. The problem was to determine on what front the troops could be used to the best advantage. If one section of the public had had their way there would have been little hesitation on that point. In its opinion the claims of France to every soldier not required actually for the defence of Great Britain and the dependencies were paramount. From one point of view the arguments in favour of this contention appeared to be incontestable. After sixteen months of war it was pretty clear that success in any subsidiary theatre would not compensate for failure to overthrow the enemy in France. But factors other than those of a purely military nature now had begun to influence the plans of the British Government. A school of thinkers had arisen, who appeared to attach less importance to finishing the War at the first possible moment than to extend the boundaries of the Empire through it. No adventure which offered prospect of fulfilling that ambition was too hazardous for supporters of this policy to contemplate. Undeterred by the gloomy experiences of Gallipoli, they would bodily have transferred the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force from Turkey in Europe to Turkey in Asia Minor. It was not enough for them that, at the instance of France, Great Britain had recently embarked upon a fresh overseas expedition at Salonica: they would have had, as a companion,

yet another in Cilicia. But His Majesty's Government would not give support to so wild a proposal. Of a choice between two evils, they would prefer to reinforce Salonica. In existing conditions the tiny British force in that area could not leave their base.

Equally fascinating to the same school was the idea of a more strenuous prosecution of the campaign in Mesopotamia. Hitherto the advance of the Indian Expeditionary Force from Basra had been provokingly slow, and after many months' campaigning a long stretch of river still separated the troops from Baghdad. The capture of that city, it was suggested, would be an exploit worth, in the future interests of the Empire, taking risks elsewhere to achieve. The creation of a vast Arab kingdom in the Near East would follow, a confederacy which England would control. The conception was attractive, and since authentic information, lately come to hand, indicated that the enemy, alive to the danger, were pushing fresh men and guns into Mesopotamia, it was clearly necessary to strengthen the British forces operating in this theatre. Happily the repatriation of the two Indian divisions from France permitted the reinforcement of the Mesopotamian front without drawing largely upon the troops released from Gallipoli.

Had, then, there been only the interests of Mesopotamia and Salonica to consider, the bulk of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force could have gone directly from the Peninsula to its sorely pressed elder brother in Flanders. But Egypt blocked the way. To Great Britain the Suez Canal had become a war asset of greater value than had been anticipated. It is hardly too much to say that no disaster at this period, short of the overthrow of the Fleet or the annihilation of the Army in France, would be comparable to the loss of that waterway. There was evidence that the Turks intended to renew the attack.

Troops and supplies were being massed in Palestine and in Syria. Aleppo and Bir Saba had been connected by rail, and the extension of the line from the latter town to the banks of the Suez Canal was planned. It was known, also, that aerodromes had been constructed at El Arish and other localities on the frontier, and that the enemy had worked steadily throughout the summer of 1915 to improve the water-supply of Sinai. In short, the British Government was doubtful of the security of the Suez Canal.

To what extent the existing force in Egypt should be strengthened depended primarily upon the Turkish decision. Constantinople was not in a position to prosecute energetically simultaneous campaigns in two such distant areas as Mesopotamia and Sinai. If report was believed, military circles in Berlin were no more impressed by the chances of a successful campaign against Egypt in 1916 than they had been in the previous year. Unless supported by a general rising of Egyptians against England, of which there was no sign, the operation in their opinion again would fail. At all events, Germany would provide no troops for the enterprise. Her resources were required in the European theatres of the war, and she had no units to waste upon subsidiary operations. She would only promise to provide the Palestine front with a few officers and rank and file specialists: for the rest Turkey, if she decided to attack Egypt, must trust to her own troops. This decision appears to have been in accord with the views of General Liman von Sanders, the chief of the German Military Mission in Constantinople. In his eyes the risks attached to a second campaign on the Suez Canal were out of proportion to the prospects of success. The Turkish armies, fresh from their victory at Gallipoli, would be swallowed up in the sands of

Sinai; for Von Sanders was too experienced in war to anticipate that the British forces would let off a second Expeditionary Corps as lightly as they had done the first. Generally, Germany favoured an offensive in Mesopotamia rather than against Egypt. Her interest in Mesopotamia was intelligible: German prestige was bound up in the railway which was planned to connect Constantinople with Baghdad. A share of the national savings had been sunk in the scheme, and the individual investor could conceive no greater misfortune than capture by England of Baghdad. This anxiety coincided with a sense of alarm in Turkey, lest she was about to lose her sovereign rights over Arab dominions. Already the Hedjaz was in revolt, and the Turkish garrisons there beleaguered. If Baghdad was captured, a heavy blow would be struck at the prestige of the Ottoman Empire. None the less, Turkey, flushed by her success at Gallipoli, might have attempted to prosecute an offensive both in Mesopotamia and Sinai, had not a recrudescence of Russian military activity in the Caucasus turned their attention from the Palestine front. Troops which might have been employed on it were diverted hastily to the new theatre, and the hope of reconquering Egypt was abandoned.

It is probable that His Majesty's Government in deciding to transfer to the Suez Canal the bulk of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force exaggerated the importance of Turkish preparations in Syria. The plans of the enemy were neither so menacing nor so extensive as suspected. The military railway constructed across Palestine excited more nervousness at home than the value of the line to the enemy deserved. Unless the railway was extended across the desert of Sinai, no commander of an army proposing to invade Egypt could expect to maintain his troops within striking distance of the Suez Canal for more than

a few hours; and authentic information declared that the Turks were unable to build the extension from want of constructional material. Above all, the complete ease with which the enemy's attack upon the Canal in the preceding February had been repulsed appeared to have escaped attention. The tactics of the defenders admittedly had been faulty, and changes in personnel and possibly some increase in the strength in the numbers of the force were advisable.<sup>1</sup> But between modest measures of this nature and the dispatch to Egypt of a powerful army there was a wide difference. In adopting the latter alternative, Great Britain presumably was determined to frighten the enemy once and for all into abandoning all idea of attack upon Egypt. Thus in January 1916 there were in position on the Suez Canal no less than three complete Army Corps, with large forces of cavalry and infantry behind. Confronting the British, there lay in scattered bivouacs on the eastern limits of the Sinai Peninsula, one hundred miles distant from the Canal, no more than a weak Turkish Division.

While the difficulties created by dumping the Base of the Gallipoli Forces within another command had not escaped attention in Egypt, their existence apparently was unnoted at home; for yet one more organization was set up in Cairo. The Levant Base Force only added to the prevailing confusion. At the close of 1915, therefore, there were three distinct commands, each independent of the others, having their head-quarters in Cairo. First came the Force in Egypt, now shorn of the duty of defending the Suez Canal, next the Egyptian Expeditionary Force,

<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested that the Canal Zone in January 1916 was used more as a *dépôt* to give a rest to troops exhausted by the fierce ordeal of Gallipoli. The Zone, no doubt, fulfilled this duty admirably; but the fact does not explain why Divisions were sent also from France to Egypt at this juncture.

and lastly the Levant Base.<sup>1</sup> At a very early stage it was apparent that Cairo was not big enough to hold so many stars of first magnitude as the respective commanders of the three organizations. General Sir A. Murray, the Commander-in-Chief of the Expeditionary Force, was the first to cut the knot. He moved to Ismailia. The War Office disbanded the Levant Base, and General Maxwell was left in Cairo, but with shrunken responsibilities. One by one the duties hitherto performed by the last were absorbed by the first, until little was left to Maxwell but the privilege of administering martial law.<sup>2</sup> The situation daily grew more embarrassing for him, and the

<sup>1</sup> The Levant Base was a Q organization to control transport and co-ordinate supply services of Expeditionary Forces. The constant change of superior authority was confusing to subordinate commanders affected by the procedure. The Port Said area, for example, within the short space of four weeks, passed from the 'Canal Defence Force' to the 'Force in Egypt', from the 'Force in Egypt' to the 'Levant Base', and from the 'Levant Base' to the 'Egyptian Expeditionary Force'. It was not surprising if the Egyptian Government became hopelessly puzzled by the intricacies of military organization.

<sup>2</sup> General Head-quarters at Ismailia did not acquiesce in every order addressed to the public by the 'Force in Egypt'. There were instances when local commanders received conflicting instructions from Cairo and Ismailia on the same subject. On Christmas Day 1915 the Force in Egypt directed that no woman be permitted to land at Port Said, unless in possession of authority to do so from it. A few days later, the local command was informed in effect from Ismailia that the authority in question was valid only if given by the Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. For a while it was possible to pursue the hazardous course of disregarding both instructions. Long before Christmas Day mail steamers had left the United Kingdom, packed with women, wives and sisters of officers stationed in Egypt. The majority of the passengers pretended to have had no warning of the fate awaiting them at Port Said, and it seemed but reasonable to accept the excuse and give the victims the benefit of the doubt. But presently there was an instance of a passenger arriving at Port Said in defiance of General Maxwell's order. He would not relent: and the lady was directed to return to Europe by the first available steamer. She appealed from that decision to Ismailia, and was authorized by G.H.Q. to remain in the Canal Zone.

War Office would have done well to spare this distinguished public servant the final indignity of supersession by an officer junior in rank.<sup>1</sup> Maxwell, accustomed to subordinate private interest to the public good, struggled on for a space of two months. His patience was then exhausted, and he proceeded home.

The work of this General Officer in Egypt during the first eighteen months of the War attracted little notice from the public at home: yet he steered the country through a critical period so adroitly, that her population forgot some of their bitterness towards Great Britain. Of that feat General Maxwell has just reason to be proud. Errors of judgement no doubt he committed. For the escape without the loss of a unit or a gun of the Turkish Expeditionary Corps from the Suez Canal in February 1915 he must bear his share of the blame. But his genius lay in administration, not in military operations. In their conduct he was not always well served by subordinates, and the true criticism to be made of his tenure of command in Egypt was his readiness to condone repeated failures in the field. Nor perhaps did he take sufficiently into counsel the leaders of the Egyptian Government. He was prone to act upon his own judgement, and, careless of conventional channels of communication, would deal directly with junior members of the Civil Service. Yet he had this excuse for the procedure. His knowledge of Egypt and of Egyptians was so profound that he rarely required advice, and agents, not counsellors, were his most pressing need at this period. To courtesy and good temper he joined native shrewdness and resolute will: four attributes indispensable to the successful administrator. His use

<sup>1</sup> Lt.-General Sir A. Murray, on the formation of the 'Egyptian Expeditionary Force', was granted the temporary rank of General, thereby becoming senior in Egypt of Lt.-General Sir J. Maxwell.



of martial law was sparing, and the fact that in the opening months of 1916 Egyptians had ceased to dread it, is the highest testimony which can be paid to his discretion. General Sir John Maxwell sailed for England in March 1916 amid expressions of universal regret, and Egypt was the poorer by his departure.

General Sir Archibald Murray, first Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, came to Egypt with an established reputation as a brilliant soldier. It was well deserved: for he had mastered all the technique of military science. No adjutant was quicker than he to detect a faulty alinement on the parade ground: no staff officer more competent to criticize an operation in the field. But virtues such as these do not signify necessarily that their possessor is the perfect leader of an army in war. A great Commander-in-Chief must have also the quality of imagination, and the personality which gains, without seeking to do so, the confidence of officers and men. General Murray had the first: that stupendous conception, the laying a pipe line across the Peninsula of Sinai, is sufficient indication of the fact. But the second eluded him. In a force which is numbered by Corps, not by Divisions, it is imperative to accentuate the sanctity of the Supreme Command: but it is doubtful in Egypt whether the emphasis was not overdone. The person of the Commander-in-Chief was unknown to all but a few of the Expeditionary Force. Finding his own reward in the simple performance of duty, he seemed to think that others must be actuated by the same lofty ideal. It was not his habit, therefore, to scatter words of praise or encouragement.<sup>1</sup> He inspired respect and fear, but not the confidence which springs from affection.

<sup>1</sup> In the heavy and continuous fighting round Qatiya during the summer of 1916 the brunt of the operations fell upon the mounted troops of the E.E.F. Their commander, during a temporary lull in

The individual members of General Head-quarters followed the example of seclusion set by the Commander-in-Chief. Knit together by common aims and ambitions, they formed an isolated society of their own. Officers passed from one appointment to another, and fresh blood was rarely imported into their ranks. No criticism was heard upon the technical capacity of the Head-quarter Staff of the Expeditionary Force: the complaint was rather that the members resembled too frequently a body of over-zealous schoolmasters, searching for faults, not virtues. There must be always some jealousy between the controlling brains of the Army and the field units; for the contrast between the comfort and security enjoyed by the first, and the inconvenience and the risk suffered by the second, is marked too sharply to expect a different relation. There is, therefore, the more reason for the Staff Officer to bear himself modestly. 'Manners', once said Lord Roberts, 'are the first attribute of a Staff Officer', and it would have been well in the late war had all General Head-quarters taken that maxim to heart. But it is absurd to suggest, or to hint, as more than one writer recently has done, that fear of death or craving for comfort impels the regular officer to join the Staff at the first opportunity. He is driven to it not from such reasons as those, but from the knowledge that employment at a General Head-quarters is the shortest and most profitable road to preferment. On the actual battlefield, individual acts of daring and initiative often pass the battle, was instructed to report to General Head-quarters at Ismailia. The chief of the General Staff received him. At the close of a lengthy conversation the C.G.S. rose to repeat the story to the Commander-in-Chief. In a few minutes he was back, the bearer of warm congratulations. The interview was at an end; but the visitor remarked later with some acidity: 'I think that the Commander-in-Chief might have given his congratulations to me in person.'

unnoticed. There is no correspondent at hand to record them in the columns of the daily Press, and no senior officer to note the names of the performers. *Sed omnes inlacrimabiles urgentur ignotique longa nocte, carent quia vate sacro.* At the head-quarters of an army, good work is quickly recognized and rewarded. In truth, the medals and decorations granted during the War were inequitably distributed. The Staff took too many, and the fighting troops too few. Although among the latter there was perhaps less envy and more contempt shown at the shower of honours which descended upon the first, yet the sore rankled. Unhappily there is no remedy. So long as stars and orders are coveted, so long will those nearest the fount appropriate the lion's share of them. A General Head-quarters is too human to transgress this universal law.

It is worth while to ask what was Egypt's opinion of the Expeditionary Force. Cairo frankly was puzzled by the size of the new-comer. Hitherto the public had discounted the significance of the alleged fresh concentrations of Turkish troops in Syria and Palestine, and had doubted the truth of reports which announced a second offensive upon the Suez Canal. The sudden arrival in Egypt of a powerful British army was disconcerting. Yet, with profound respect for the judgement of His Majesty's Government, Egypt was reluctant to believe that the enemy would repeat an operation which had failed so conspicuously a few months before; or that the Canal Zone would become a second Gallipoli, with the rôles of the combatants reversed. Public opinion was perplexed, and the Egyptian Government from another point of view no less so. It was unknown whether General Murray or General Maxwell was the supreme military authority in the country, and uncertainty on this

point was not dispelled until the latter had left Egypt.

But the anxiety of the Government was groundless. General Murray was in Egypt to make war, not to meddle in the domestic problems of that country. Throughout his command of the Expeditionary Force he strove to adhere to that attitude. When circumstances forced him later to depart from it, he did so unwillingly, and with hesitation. He was a soldier, not an administrator, and nothing in his actions suggested that he desired to become the latter. He was very wise to confine himself to war, for to conduct simultaneously a campaign and the duties of government is a task beyond the capacity of a single individual to undertake. Nor are the staff of a commander-in-chief competent to advise upon matters of civil administration. They have been trained in the technique of war, and apprenticeship to that trade is indifferent education for the delicate duties of civil government. Whenever the professional soldier attempts to perform the latter, he seldom succeeds. His watchword is rapid decision: a quality less valuable in the civilian than patient consideration. Lord Kitchener, perhaps, was an exception to the rule; but his peculiar type of mind rarely is found in the Army. The truth is that the soldier has a different outlook on life from the civilian, and matters which appear to be important to the latter are commonplaces to the former, and conversely. Thus, in co-operation, a military Staff and a Civil Service are ill-assorted partners. Their respective prejudices foster misunderstanding, until neither party gives credit to the point of view of the other. The numbers and complexity of the General Head-quarters of the new Egyptian Force also bewildered the Egyptian Government.<sup>1</sup> The Civil Service, accustomed to the

<sup>1</sup> From investigations made during the early part of 1917 by

directness of General Maxwell, could not understand why personal access to his successor was so difficult, and the sublime disregard of money by the Expeditionary Force frightened it. Trained to regard finance as the mainspring of public life, the British official could not applaud the prodigal expenditure of money by the Army. The number of motor-cars at the disposal of staff officers for their private use seemed to the civilian a significant example of the military tendency to waste money. On the other hand, General Head-quarters hardly attempted to conceal amusement at the *laissez-faire* attitude of members of the Egyptian Government towards work; and it must be confessed that the methods of the Civil Service were fairly open to criticism. It was hardly in accordance with these dark days that all Departments of State should cease to work shortly after midday, or postpone for dispatch until the following morning business unfinished at that hour. Such procedure, however suitable in peace-time to the a Committee upon Man Power in Egypt, it transpired that the strength of G.H.Q. alone was as follows :

Officers . . . . .	146
Warrant officers . . . . .	21
Sergeants . . . . .	59
Other ranks . . . . .	178
Soldier servants, grooms . . . . .	258
	<hr/>
	662

In addition, serving with the 3rd Echelon in Alexandria were 34 officers and 496 other ranks.

On the other hand, at this period, the ration strength of attested troops in the E.E.F. was no more than 170,000.

Incidentally the report throws instructive light upon the potential (not effective) rifle strength of an army in the field. The potential strength of the E.E.F. amounted only to 82,000 troops, or approximately 48 per cent. of the total members of the force. The residue consisted of administrative troops (32,000), troops in hospital, Base dépôts, and so on (29,000), and odd fighting units, as Artillery, R.F.C., and staffs of unit commands.

habits of a country, was less so in war. Perhaps the Government could not be expected to alter their procedure, but it was largely responsible for the creation of an unfortunate belief, never wholly eradicated, that Egypt gave no more than half-hearted assistance to the British Army.

That impression was quite incorrect. From the beginning to the end, Egypt gave generously from her resources. Without the co-operation of two Egyptian Ministries, the Public Works and the Railways, the Expeditionary Force would have been forced, like its predecessor, to remain tied to the banks of the Suez Canal, and without the assistance of the Egyptian Labour Corps and the Camel Transport Corps the British advance across Sinai into Palestine would have been more protracted. The Public Works, in particular, during the early months of 1916, did admirable work in the Canal Zone, where the new scheme of defence envisaged the construction of three lines. The most advanced, pushed out a dozen miles or so into the desert, was to be lightly held; six miles in rear would run the second, a chain of stout redoubts, strongly garrisoned; while the third rested upon the Canal itself. To provide for the supply service of the two advanced lines, their rapid reinforcement from the third, and for lateral communications, good roads were essential, and to maintain the Expeditionary Force at all on the east bank ample supplies of potable water were required. These were the two tasks which devolved upon the Ministry of Public Works.<sup>1</sup>

Since time was of prime importance to the programme, it was unfortunate that this Ministry at the

<sup>1</sup> An excellent account of the work has been written by Mr. E. H. Lloyd, Director-General, Main Drainage Department, Egyptian Government, in a Note published in the Minutes of the Institute of Civil Engineers, vol. ccvi.

outset was handicapped by difficulties which it was powerless to remove. The Canal Company, nervous of the enemy's mine layers, would take no risks. Traffic throughout the length of the Canal was still suspended from sunset to dawn, and the channel swept each morning before shipping left their temporary moorings. The craft employed by the Public Works had to conform to this routine, and the transport of stone and material suffered delay. There was also a second and equally serious hindrance to the work. Difficulties had arisen over the admittance of fellahin labour into the Canal Zone. No local supply being available, the Public Works were obliged to bring men from the agricultural districts. But the Intelligence Section of G.H.Q., dreading lest enemy agents should be among these people, insisted upon the examination of each gang before it passed into the Zone. Not only did this operation delay the engineering work, but it excited alarm in the breast of the ignorant fellah. Few are so nervous of police measures as Egyptians, and the system of permits and passes introduced by the Intelligence Section of G.H.Q. frightened the labour. It is a matter of opinion, whether in the end the fellah was not more suspicious of the Army than the Army was of him. Even when he had survived the scrutiny of the Intelligence Agent, his troubles were not at an end. The Medical Service had to be satisfied that the labourer was free from infectious disease.

Notwithstanding these hindrances, the Ministry of Public Works duly completed the programme. Some 200 miles of metalled roadway were constructed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The scheme allowed a width of metalled surface of 16 feet for roads connecting the Canal and the second line; and 9 feet for the communications between the latter and the most advanced posts. Fortunately, ample supplies of suitable metalling material exist in the Zone. Over one million tons of stone were quarried under the direction of the Public Works and used for metalling.

Simultaneously the water-supply was taken in hand. A series of borings in areas adjacent to the Canal showed that no potable water existed in the locality. Unless, therefore, condensing plant was installed, it was clear that the supply must be got from the Sweet-water Canal, running parallel with the west bank of the Marine Canal. Supply stations thereupon were erected at six points, and fed large storage reservoirs on the east bank by means of siphons resting on the bed of the Canal. Over 150 miles of mains conducted the water from the reservoirs to the advanced posts.<sup>1</sup> Elaborate precautions were taken to ensure a pure supply. Bilharzia, a scourge of Egypt, is terribly prevalent in the Canal Zone. Gauze strainers, fitted at the intake of the pumps, prevented the water snail, whereon the bilharzia parasite exists, from passing into the sedimentation basins. At the inlet of the latter, the water was treated with a solution of alum, and then run through filter beds, where the liquid was chlorinated as a precaution against typhoid infection. Finally, at each station a daily bacteriological examination was made of the water. The trouble spent over these precautions was repaid a hundredfold. As far as is known, no case of bilharzia, or of other malady attributable to the drinking of impure water, occurred among the troops on the Canal.

Hitherto, no more had been asked from the State Railways than to build a couple of serviceable armoured trains and a few hospital trains. Heavier

<sup>1</sup> Egypt could supply only a small proportion of the piping required. The balance came from America. It was a piece of good fortune that the consignment of pipes reached Port Said safely: for the Mediterranean at that period was no sea for unescorted tramp steamers, loaded with war material, to sail. The master of the first vessel to arrive allowed that he had been fortunate to survive the risks. At the port of loading he declared that betting men were laying five to one against his making Port Said, and the odds did not appear to be too liberal.



responsibilities now were about to fall upon their shoulders. The immediate problem was to transport vast numbers of troops and animals from Alexandria to the Canal Zone. From Zagazig to Ismailia the track was single, and little experience of railway movements was necessary to recognize that the permanent way must be doubled. There was no time to dispossess, under the ordinary forms of law, owners of the land which was required for the purpose. Whatever area was wanted must be taken at once, and General Maxwell, for the first time, made use of his requisitioning powers under martial law. Under a proclamation dated the 4th December 1915, he authorized the State Railways to take possession of the land required. There was nothing harsh or unusual in the measure. The expropriation by the Government of private property on the score of public utility is an everyday occurrence in Egypt. Nor, in fact, did the dispossessed owners protest: for the proclamation promised them adequate compensation. The doubling of the line was performed with unexpected rapidity. Even the ordinary train service was little disturbed; while unit after unit, with animals and baggage, were conveyed from the port of disembarkation to the Canal Zone without confusion and without accident. The general manager had good reason to be proud of his staff.

In the midst of this business, the same administration was invited by the Expeditionary Force to undertake a second task. Under the scheme drawn up for the defence of the Canal, it was laid down that the roads would be kept free for the movement of troops and guns, the supply services being provided with light railways. The Expeditionary Force was not in a position to construct the latter: it had neither the material nor the technical staff. In this predicament, the Commander-in-Chief turned to the

Egyptian Government. The request was made at an inconvenient moment, for the Railways Administration had their hands full. All available personnel were employed in double tracking the Zagazig-Ismailia line, and although the administration could engage unskilled labour for the new constructional work, it was less easy to find suitable Egyptians who could be trusted to supervise the work of the gangs. Once again the Egyptian Government came to the rescue. All army reservists were recalled to the Colours<sup>1</sup> and a proportion of the ex-soldiers were lent to the State Railways. Even then the troubles of the latter were not at an end. Rails, sleepers, and other material had to be collected from the interior, and technical personnel relieved from their normal duties. In face of these difficulties, it was a creditable achievement to construct over 100 miles of light railway on the east bank of the Canal in the short space of a few weeks.<sup>2</sup> Nor did the task of the administration finish at that point. It was part of the Commander-in-Chief's plans to occupy the oasis of Qatiya, approximately 30 miles to the north-east of Qantara, and to carry out this intention he designed to connect Qatiya and Qantara by a broad-gauge railway. The construction of the permanent way was begun at once. Other military lines, also, were projected in Egypt, notably one from Minia to the oasis of Baharia, fifty miles to the west of the Nile.

Like many other military organizations which achieved fame in the later stages of the War, the Egyptian Labour Corps began on modest lines. At the request of the Mediterranean Expeditionary

<sup>1</sup> Arrête by the Minister of War, dated 20th January 1916.

<sup>2</sup> The light railways were laid from the following places on the Canal. Port Said, Ballah, Ferdan, Ferry Port, Serapeum, Shallufa, Kubri, and El Shatt. Of 2 feet 6 inches gauge, their respective lengths varied from six to twenty miles.

Force, in August 1915 some 500 labourers had been collected from the southern provinces of Egypt and sent to Mudros. So successful was their work on that island that further demands upon Egypt were made, and at the date of the evacuation of Gallipoli the Corps had attained a strength of nearly 3,000 men. At this period the Army was beginning to have clearer ideas upon the proper employment of the attested soldier. In past campaigns he had been required to handle supplies and stores, as well as to fight. Wasteful as such procedure must always be, at this juncture it was criminal: for there were hardly enough British soldiers to fill gaps in the fighting line. The Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force early had grasped the implication of that painful truth, and in substituting, whenever and wherever conditions allowed, the unarmed Egyptian for the attested soldier, he raised the effective rifle strength of his army. His plans were aided by two factors. In the labour battalion evacuated from Mudros, he possessed the nucleus of a more extensive organization; and in the agricultural districts of the Delta he had at command a recruiting area as yet untouched. Hitherto the labour had come mainly from the southern provinces; and of its quality there were no two opinions. That part of Egypt breeds men of magnificent physique and unrivalled capacity of endurance. While all forms of manual work come alike to them, they excel in just the type required then by the Expeditionary Force, earth excavation. But from a military point of view the Southern Egyptian, or the Saidi as he is familiarly known, has two fatal defects. He will not contract to serve an employer for a period exceeding three to four months; nor will he renew his engagement until his savings are exhausted. Such expressions as 'the duration of the War' are totally incomprehensible to

him, and part of the later troubles in connexion with recruiting arose from the incapacity of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force to recognize the strength of Egyptian prejudice upon that point.

Unable to enlist Saidis, the Directorate of Military Labour looked confidently to the Delta for the supply of men. The result was less satisfactory than had been anticipated. The fellah is an agriculturist, not a navvy, and his capacity to excavate earth is considerably inferior to that of the Saidi. Worse still, only with great difficulty is he persuaded to leave his village. Service in the Labour Corps was never attractive to him, and almost from the first there was difficulty in obtaining the required number of recruits. Still that difficulty might have been surmounted had not constant expansion of the Corps taken place. Even as early as the spring of 1917 the recruiting situation was unsatisfactory. The extension of the railway and pipe line from Qatiya into Palestine had called for the formation of fresh companies, and simultaneously other theatres of war were clamouring for a share of Egypt's labour.<sup>1</sup> It became obvious then that unless some measure of compulsion was applied, sufficient recruits for the Egyptian Auxiliary Corps would never be available.<sup>2</sup> It is desirable to be clear upon one point. The objection of the fellah to serve in the Labour and other Auxiliary Corps was due to no fear of harsh treatment in the field. Once drafted into a company he accepted his new condition of life without complaint. He might well do so. The ration was good and plentiful; the daily task of work within his capacity to perform; and rough and ready justice distributed impartially. In turn the men behaved well. Yet it would be incorrect from that

<sup>1</sup> Between the autumn of 1915 and the spring of 1916, 8,500 E.L.C. were drafted to Mesopotamia and 10,500 to France.

<sup>2</sup> The subject is treated more fully in Chapter XV.

fact to assume that they were content with their lot, or that they were proud of their association with the British Army. They disliked both impartially. Nor should any one be misled into a contrary impression by loose talk of Egyptian politicians of the noble part played by the Auxiliary Corps in the triumph of the British Expeditionary Force. Egypt has every right to be proud of the achievements of her Labour Corps : but no fellah joined it from desire to save his country from invasion, and no educated Egyptian ever served in its ranks.

Considering the inexperience of the British personnel of the Labour Corps it is rather surprising that discipline was so well maintained. The local supply of Englishmen, qualified from knowledge of Arabic and acquaintance with Egyptian habits to become officers of the Corps, was soon exhausted, and commissions were offered to others who had nothing to recommend them but good record of service in the ranks of the Expeditionary Force. It is the more gratifying, therefore, to state of the trying days of March 1919, when Egypt temporarily lost her senses, that the Labour Corps was unaffected by the turmoil. The men were terribly tempted. In some localities, notably the Canal Zone, desperate efforts were made to induce them to join the rioters. Yet despite appeals to their patriotism and even to their religion, the rank and file never wavered. There was no instance of desertion : and no instance of combined insubordination. Egyptians, indeed, when treated considerately and fairly, are easy people to manage. Trouble begins when promises are broken.

While labour companies usually worked and lived behind the firing line, the Camel Transport Corps suffered very different conditions. Wherever the fighting units marched, close at their heels trod the transport camels. Hostile fire took heavy toll of the

drivers: sickness played havoc with their strength. But the men did not flinch from the shells, and, urged on by the unbending will and inexhaustible energy of the Commanding Officer, did not cease to march.<sup>1</sup> Ruthless and tireless himself, he accepted no excuse from sections which failed to reach their rendezvous. That was the one unpardonable crime of the Transport Corps. Well might a Commission investigating the subject of Man Power in Egypt describe this unit as a 'unique creation'. The phrase was well chosen.<sup>2</sup>

Before the arrival of General Sir A. Murray in Egypt there was no pack transport suitable for desert operations. A thousand or so camels, privately owned, had been collected by the Canal Defence Force at Ismailia during the winter of 1914-15 for inter-post services: but no serious attempt had been made to train either the drivers or their animals in supply work in the field. The Expeditionary Force, with an eye upon the future, at once began the formation of a mobile unit upon more military and serviceable lines. Large numbers of camels were purchased outright, and the hired drivers replaced by enlisted Egyptians. Within a few weeks the new Corps had taken shape. By the end of March five companies were formed, each of 2,000 burden camels. Two months later the numbers of animals on charge of the unit had almost doubled. This rapid development was a very remarkable piece of work: the more so since the Commanding Officer had no nucleus of camels or personnel to build upon,<sup>3</sup> and no time to instruct either animals or men in their duties. As

<sup>1</sup> Lt.-Colonel C. W. Whittingham, C.M.G., D.S.O., Reserve of Officers, who raised and commanded the Corps throughout its service.

<sup>2</sup> Not the least remarkable detail of the organization of the Corps was the economy in British personnel. In July 1917 the establishment was: British all ranks 217, Egyptian 21,000.

<sup>3</sup> On the 1st December 1915 at Ismailia there were no more than 600 camels at the disposal of the Canal Defence Force.

soon as a company was equipped it was sent into the field, and its place at the *dépôt* taken by another party of officers and men. What the Corps learnt, in the first days of its existence, of transport technique or of the treatment of camels it acquired in the hardest of all schools, by experience. Unfortunately the British soldier was slower to learn. He never succeeded entirely in ridding his mind of the strange obsession that a camel possessed the endurance of a motor-car. When the Corps was taken off convoy duty and ordered to act as first-line transport, the company formation would be broken up and the camels distributed among the troops. Then, despite the protests of the transport officers, the troops would pile over-regulation loads upon the patient beasts, and urge the drivers to keep pace with the marching column.<sup>1</sup> The casualty bill on these occasions was heavy. The Corps officers had good reason to watch the daily return of camels reported unfit for duty, since many weeks might elapse before the losses were replaced. Egypt in fact was soon drained of fresh supplies. Owners would not sell, and military authority hesitated at this early period to dispossess them forcibly of their animals. The purchasing commissions, therefore, had to go far afield to find camels. New ground was explored in the Sudan, Somaliland, Algeria, and even in India. And not

<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding these disabilities the animal casualties of the Corps in the first months of its existence were less than might have been expected. From January to May 1916, 350 deaths were reported, and 1,900 sent to the sick lines for treatment: figures which contrast strikingly (though the conditions were not entirely analogous) with the reported casualty returns of the Turkish Expeditionary Force or of the Sudan Desert Column of 1884-5. The latter column had started its march to Khartoum with 7,000 camels. In less than three months only 1,200 were reported to be fit for duty. 4,000 of the balance had died, strayed, or were lost to the column from other causes.

only was there delay in replacing casualties, but the cost of the substitutes by the time they were delivered to the Army amounted to prodigious sums. Since 72,000 camels were purchased for the Egyptian Camel Transport Corps from one source or another, the maintenance of the unit was no small item in the war expenditure of the Egyptian theatre.

Before measures of compulsion were applied there was equal difficulty in finding drivers.<sup>1</sup> Such were the hardships endured by all ranks serving in the Corps, that fellahin drafted into it gave themselves up as lost men. They might well do so: for numbers died in field hospitals, while many others must have succumbed on return to their villages from disease contracted on service.<sup>2</sup> Yet despite the danger and hardship of the work, strangely enough there was always a small but steady percentage of drivers who undertook to serve a second engagement: testimony less to the attractiveness of the life than to the personality of their leaders. Considering the apparent indifference of the Expeditionary Force towards the comfort of the Egyptian personnel, it is a matter of wonder why at moments the latter did not desert in a body to the enemy. They could hardly have been worse off in Turkish captivity. In the first months of 1916 drivers had no uniform and only one blanket, and with that travesty of equipment they supported the rigours of a campaign in Sinai. Later the Corps was better treated. The step was not taken too soon, for Palestine was about to test the endurance of the men more severely than had Sinai. Palestine in winter is no country to campaign in with comfort, and pack transport suffers most of all from the inclemency of the weather. Fighting units may halt to

<sup>1</sup> 170,000 Egyptians served in the C.T.C.

<sup>2</sup> Of the drivers 220 were killed and 1,400 wounded by enemy action. 4,000 died in the field hospitals.



await better conditions: but for the supply convoys there can be no rest. Torrential rains destroy the wretched tracks which serve as roads, and wash out long stretches of the railway. All mechanical and wheeled transport at these periods is brought to a standstill, and camels take its place. The Corps acquitted itself gloriously of the task. Through mud and storm the companies fought their way to the line. Animals and men perished miserably by the road, and convoys lost their direction. But the discipline and the organization of the units stood the strain, and the troops were fed. Rightly was the Camel Transport Corps described as a 'unique creation'.

## XI

### DISCIPLINE IN A THEATRE OF WAR

AMONG the many territorial expressions coined, often very aptly, by military authority in Egypt during the War was that of the Canal Zone. Geographically the term was a little clumsy, since of the area, triangular in shape, only the base, the Suez Canal itself, and the apex, a point on the railway between Zagazig and Ismailia, were fixed physically. But the expression was understood by the public, and served the military purpose. The declared intention of the Ottoman Empire to attack Egypt made the isolation of the Zone from the rest of Egypt inevitable in December 1914. While no man could foretell the ultimate course of events, it was certain that the line of the Canal would be the first objective of the invader. In these circumstances the British Commander was entitled to claim to be master in his own house. To provide for the defence he must hold supreme authority, civil as well as military. Measures irksome to the civilian population would have to be taken. Villages lying within the area must be evacuated by their residents; individuals suspected of sympathy with the enemy be sent away; and the inhabitants of the towns of Port Said, Ismailia, and Suez forced to submit to restrictions upon their freedom. In short, the Suez Canal must become a war area.

But the commander of the Defence Force had neither sufficient troops, nor the necessary local knowledge, to undertake the delicate duty of policing the Zone. His troops were barely strong enough to man the length of the Canal, and he had no units to spare for administrative duties. Nor in the reverse

could he have employed men usefully on such work : for no political or other officer well acquainted with Egyptian conditions was attached to Head-quarters at Ismailia. Wisely in these conditions he declined to usurp the functions of the Civil Administration, and confined himself to the defence of the Canal against the armed enemy. From that attitude he would not depart. He issued no proclamations and published no orders to the civilian population ; he assembled no military courts for the trial of offenders who purposely or accidentally transgressed the instructions of commanders of the various sectors of the Canal ; and he initiated no steps to control the movement of persons within the Zone. To the Egyptian Government the task of handling these and similar matters, indirect consequences of a state of war, was left. The division of duty was not unreasonable. Egypt, whose protection was assured by the presence of a British army on her frontier, plainly was bound to relieve the latter of all secondary business. Unhappily the theory worked less well in practice. Bewildered by the novelty of the situation, the Egyptian Government would only act under explicit direction, and that direction she awaited in vain in the Canal Zone.

During the winter of 1914-15 the few feeble attempts to police militarily the Zone achieved barren result. If there were excuses, more or less valid in the beginning, to condone failure, there were none which accounted for later inaction. Save for occasional raids by the enemy, the calm of the Zone during the summer and autumn was unbroken. That peaceful period should have been utilized to draw a police cordon round the military area and supervise movement within it. Clouds already were gathering on the Egyptian horizon, growing daily more menacing, as the issue of the campaign on Gallipoli hung uncertainly in the balance. If fortune there declared herself

against the British arms, Turkey would again turn her thoughts upon the conquest of Egypt. The first attempt had failed: a second, undertaken by units encouraged by their triumph in the Dardanelles, might have a different ending. Or if that contingency was thought too remote for serious consideration it was imprudent at least to ignore the possibility of the enemy gaining partial success in one or other sector of the Defence.

Throughout the year 1915 there was no sign in the Zone that authority apprehended danger in the future. Only the east bank of the Canal was forbidden ground to the public: elsewhere in the area life proceeded as if profound peace prevailed in Sinai. Port Said was crowded with visitors desirous of escaping from the tedium and heat of life in Cairo. No thought of the bloody shambles at Gallipoli spoilt the zest of pleasure seekers: no reflection that similar conditions later might occur on the banks of the Canal hindered the appetite for amusement.

Early in January 1916 this halycon period abruptly came to an end. The Canal Defence as a military formation was disbanded and its place taken by the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. It was quickly apparent that the new-comers took a more serious view of war than their predecessors had done. Little attention was paid now to the convenience of the civilian population of the Zone: little respect shown for the *amour propre* of the Civil Administration. The Expeditionary Force had no time to consider sentiment. While shaping plans for an elaborate defence of the Suez Canal from armed attack, simultaneously General Head-quarters were framing schemes to assure safety within their gates. The old order of things had passed away, and the Canal Zone was about to become a war area in fact, as well as in name. The first efforts to accomplish this feat were not

entirely successful. Egypt was curtly informed that the State Railways would issue no tickets for stations within the Zone, unless intending travellers produced permits authorizing them to proceed to that area. Unfortunately it was forgotten by authority that an alternative route existed through Damietta and across the Lake Manzala to Port Said, and the public took advantage of the oversight. Applicants for permits had some excuse for practising this deceit upon the issuing authority. The Egyptian Government had undertaken this duty. But their office hours were so short, public holidays, when no business at all was transacted, so frequent, and the routine inquiries to establish the identity of applicants so elaborate and protracted, that it was no easy matter to obtain permits. The bulk of the travelling public in consequence made use of the longer alternative route as a matter of course.

The stratagem defeated the military intention, and General Head-quarters blamed the Civil Administration for the miscarriage of the scheme. But the reproach was not altogether justified: for the second had not been invited to devise a scheme, but merely asked to carry out definite instructions. Unreasonably vexed with the failure, the General Staff of the Expeditionary Force, declining further partnership with the Civil Administration, appointed, in the three towns of the Canal Zone and in the important centres of Egypt, their own permit officers. The duties of the latter, and the obligations of travellers, were defined in a proclamation published on the 18th May 1916. Under that document entry into the Canal Zone was rigorously restricted. The inconveniences which the Egyptian had suffered at the hands of the previous issuing authority were insignificant compared with the obstacles strewn in his path by the new. No distinction was drawn

between Europeans and Egyptians: applicants, irrespective of nationality, must produce a certificate of identity and personal recommendations of character before the permit was granted. For substantial reasons Port Said fell heavily under the military ban. No individual within the Zone, whether resident or visitor, henceforth might enter or leave this town without special authority, and, as if that restriction was not enough, a second order closed Port Said once and for all to the public who had no definite business in it. The news created profound dismay in the foreign community of Cairo. Families, anxious to escape the expense imposed by the overcrowding of Alexandria, already had laid their plans to spend the approaching summer in Port Said. Hotels had raised their prices: houses and flats had been let at extravagant rates. Bitterly did residents of Port Said, expecting to reap a golden harvest, murmur at the decision of the Commander-in-Chief. Yet in the interests of the discipline of the troops the step was wise: otherwise the town would have become the Capua of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

More remained to be accomplished before General Head-quarters were satisfied with their control of the movement of civilians in the Zone. Egyptians had found a way of evading the restrictions by professing to be members of the crews of craft working up and down the Canal. It was impracticable to distinguish travellers from members of the crew: or in cases of uncertainty to stop for purposes of investigation the further passage of convoys of lighters loaded with military supplies. For a period the difficulty was overcome by placing guards upon craft in the service of the Inland Water Transport: a wasteful procedure which was quickly abandoned when the Expeditionary Force felt the pinch in men. But in the early months of 1916 economy of men or of money was not

a marked feature of the administration of the Army in Egypt. Upon permit duties, for example, were employed highly trained and highly paid military policemen, members of the Provost Marshal's staff. Up and down the Canal Zone these men travelled daily on the trains, performing the mechanical duty of examining permits.

Meanwhile other and different problems which war brings in its train were confronting subordinate commanders in the Zone. The troops, bored with a continuous and monotonous round of drill and fatigue duty on the east bank of the Canal, sought amusement and change of scene where they could. Cairo and Alexandria were out of reach of most: Port Said, closer at hand, was an attractive alternative. Local leave was given liberally to all ranks, and the town was crowded with troops. *Sirenum voces et Circae pocula* beckoned the adventurous: the shop windows the more prudent. Once more, and for the last time during the War, the local traders reaped rich profits. No rubbish was so bad that it could not be foisted upon the unsuspecting soldier, who spent his money royally upon spurious curios, hardly worth the cost of their postage to England. It would have been well for the visitor had he committed no other folly but wasting his pay upon trash. Unhappily more vicious pursuits tempted him. At the corner of every street stood a drinking bar where fiery liquor was sold at extravagant prices. The proprietor, always a European of low class, securely entrenched in the Capitulations, laughed at the efforts of the Civil Administration to dislodge him. Daily the number of establishments where alcohol was sold increased: daily the spectacle of drunken soldiers and sailors became more common. Disorder followed. The few military policemen stationed in the area could not watch each bar: and the civil police, true

to inherited instinct, hesitated to interfere in disputes between Europeans. The respectable residents of the town, accustomed during the preceding twelve months to the sober and decorous behaviour of Indian troops, looked askance at the ways of the Expeditionary Force, and longed earnestly for the hour when the latter would tire of Port Said. It was perhaps inevitable that a proportion of the men, fresh from the horrors of Gallipoli, should seek the first occasion to plunge into debauch. They were but the victims of authority, too supine to strangle the evil. It was the vendor who deserved no mercy. His drink was vile and dear.

Various endeavours, more or less negative in effect to stop drunkenness among the troops, already had been made. The Army had forbidden under substantial penalties the sale of alcoholic liquor to the public between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. as far back as the 15th June 1915. This measure of early closing may have sent people earlier to bed, but it did nothing to reduce the alarming incidence of misbehaviour in units. Legislation more drastic in type was needed in Egypt if soldiers were to be kept sober, and General Maxwell, with accustomed shrewdness, was the first to perceive the real remedy: the delegation to every subordinate commander of complete control of the sale of alcoholic liquor within the limits of his own area. Each commander henceforth prohibited and restricted the trade as he thought fit. It was now within his power summarily to close an establishment, whether the owner was prosecuted or not: or if he desired to impose further penalties he could bring the offender before a military court. Never was military legislation more opportune: never more salutary. The proclamation<sup>1</sup> produced marvellous effects: drunkenness almost ceased. The

<sup>1</sup> Published on the 3rd January 1916, and amended by a second proclamation a month later.



Port Said Command took advantage at once of their new powers. The sale of liquor was confined to two short periods in the day,<sup>1</sup> and the town quickly recovered its old sobriety.

It need hardly be said that the civilian population did not welcome the restrictions. Complaints poured in on every side. The trade in particular expressed hot resentment. Hotels and clubs claimed exemption on the score that their customers and members should not be invited to expiate the sins of the Army, and individuals complained to superior authority of unwarrantable interference with their liberty. The protests were unavailing. To distinguish in Port Said between civilians and troops would have robbed the local restrictions of half their value : and the innocent suffered with the guilty. Throughout the War, and for many months following the Armistice, the control of the sale of drink remained unaltered. Many proprietors of bars sought to evade the military order. Their success was short-lived : sooner or later retribution overtook the culprits. It was a useless waste of valuable time to pursue them to a military court—the summary closure of the establishments sufficiently punished the owners. As the War drew to a close the number of bars and hotels with shuttered windows

<sup>1</sup> Alcohol could only be served between the hours of 1–3 p.m. and 7–9 p.m., and no exception ever was made to that rule. It was difficult to resist every appeal : as, for example, one from a ruling Prince proceeding to England to represent India at an Imperial Conference, who was giving a luncheon party in a Port Said hotel. The cruiser sent to convey His Highness to Marseilles was sailing at 1 p.m., and the lunch was fixed for noon. Dismayed to learn at the last moment that no wine could be served at table, the Prince, as a personal favour, begged that the rule be relaxed on this occasion. The position was embarrassing. Not only is it always difficult for a guest to refuse his host, but the local command had been explicitly instructed to offer every courtesy to the representative of India. But war is no respecter of personages or of their desires, and authority would not give way. It remains to add that His Highness took the refusal good-humouredly.

and barred doors grew in the town, each bearing the melancholy inscription, 'Closed by order of the military authorities.' But the evil was not yet eradicated, and men still drank deeply during the limited hours when alcohol might be served. Further restrictions and measures were imposed. Among them was one which declared that any bar or hotel wherein a civilian or a soldier was observed intoxicated, or wherein any disturbance involving police action took place, would be summarily closed. This arbitrary order operated harshly in many cases: frequently the proprietor himself had not served the customer. But no excuse or apology was accepted. Better the ruin of one individual than the sacrifice of the discipline of a war area.

Unhappily the troops did not confine their taste for dissipation solely to indulgence in alcohol, and more insidious and more dangerous temptations assailed them in Port Said. Napier, in his *History of the Peninsular War*, described dysentery as 'the scourge of armies': the student of the bypaths of the European War more fitly may apply that phrase to venereal disease. Sanitation and inoculation have robbed dysentery, typhoid, and cholera, once deadly foes of an army in the field, of their former terror, and to such a pitch of excellence had the medical organization of the Expeditionary Force grown that the troops suffered from no one of those maladies. But if sanitation could keep camps healthy, and could assure the purity of the water-supply, and if inoculation could provide immunity from the more deadly maladies, medical authority was not yet in a position to safeguard the soldier in towns of the type of Port Said or Cairo from the consequences of promiscuous intercourse with the other sex. Drink and lust are a well-matched pair: the first plays into the hands of the second. To preach abstinence to men who will

admit no rule in life but the right to indulge their carnal appetites when and where they will, is pure waste of time in war. It is useless to point out the physical danger of surrender to passion: useless to appeal to more lofty motives. There is but one course to pursue at these times: stamp out the opportunities of sating lust. Already the drink problem in Port Said had been treated on those lines, and the time was come to try the same experiment in another and more confusing issue.

From its earliest existence Port Said has borne an unenviable reputation for vice. The town has been spoken of as a 'Hell upon earth', or 'the filthiest sink in the world'; exaggerated descriptions no doubt in 1914, yet containing some foundation of truth. Under the enlightened administration of successive governors a few of the more glaring abuses had been eliminated during the years immediately preceding the War. The disreputable gaming saloons, once a notorious feature of the town, had disappeared, and with them the public exhibition of obscene photographs. But reform had scratched the surface only. Games of hazard still were played, and the same disgusting photographs still were sold surreptitiously inside countless shops. Nor were the pimps who infested the public thoroughfares seriously diminished either in number or in boldness. A stranger need but pause one minute in a frequented street and he was surrounded at once by these pests of society. Like the flies of the country they buzzed around the person of their prospective prey until he succumbed to their persuasive tongues, or angrily shook them off. Within two minutes' walk of the water's edge, in gloomy and insanitary tenements, were the European public women. Fitly was the central street of the quarter wherein they lived named Rue Babel. Of all nationalities, these poor creatures

dwelt in an inferno from which escape was impossible, save to a second, where conditions would be no better: for before the War Port Said was one of the centres of the White Slave Trade between Central Europe and the East. Conducted by its exploiters upon commercial lines, the trade used the port as a clearing house, where women were left until a suitable opportunity arose for their transfer to the bagnios of Bombay, Singapore, and other maritime towns. In correspondence one with another the traffickers coolly would discuss in business terms the cash value of their property. If one girl was a good article, reliable and profitable to her owners, a second was intractable, and to be had cheaply. Thus, under the eyes of Great Britain, did some men gain a living in Egypt in the year of our Lord 1914.

War put an end to the commerce, and gave the commandant of the local police the chance which he had sought in vain elsewhere. Assured of support from military authority, he forced the women out of the districts inhabited by the European residents of the town, offering to each victim of his order the choice between leaving the Canal Zone or residing in the quarter of the town reserved for the Egyptian members of this melancholy profession. The arrangement was not ideal: morally, indeed, it was indefensible. But under it military authority rashly assumed that the medical profession would be in a position to exercise more effective control over public women, and that the troops who frequented their society would secure greater immunity from disease. The latter expectation, based upon gross ignorance of pathology, naturally was not fulfilled.

In Cairo the problem, no less acute, was more difficult to solve by reason of the extent of the evil and the size of the city. Conditions in that city differed little from those reigning at Port Said.

Within a stone's throw of the terrace of Shepherd's Hotel vice flaunted shamelessly. General Headquarters, anxious scientifically to protect the troops, were handicapped by the existence of a small but influential section of public opinion which disapproved of all prophylactic methods. It may be well asked why Egypt had permitted for so long in the heart of the great towns the presence of these plague spots, sad stains upon her reputation for decent administration. The answer is simple. The Capitulations strangled every effort of reform. They guarded the interest of the European prostitute as they defended that of the capitalist. Each woman claimed as her inalienable right the protection of the consul. By prescription public women had made certain residential quarters of the town their own. To dispossess them of that pretension was beyond the power of the Egyptian Government.

As early as the summer of 1916 the incidence of venereal disease among the rank and file of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force had attracted attention. Medical officers began publicly to express alarm.<sup>1</sup> But little general interest was displayed until the Commander-in-Chief busied himself in the problem. He spoke with no uncertain voice of the effect which venereal disease was producing upon the rifle strength of the Expeditionary Force, and he established in various centres Purity committees who would advise local commanders on the steps to be taken to arrest the incidence of the evil. In the main these committees accomplished little. Perhaps the original instructions placed too great stress upon

<sup>1</sup> Notably Colonel Sir James Barrett, R.A.M.C., K.B.E., of the Australian Imperial Forces, whose works, *The Australian Medical Corps in Egypt, 1914-15* (in collaboration with Lieutenant Deane), and *The Twin Ideals*, may be commended to any reader interested in this grim subject.

the ethical aspect of the subject, and many of their members confused two separate issues, uncertain in the end whether they sat to consider the subject from a disciplinary or from a moral point of view. Yet evidence of the prevalence of disease was accumulating fast. In April 1916, in one formation of the Army, admission from venereal disease into hospital had risen to the annual ratio of 25 per cent., and the average annual rate throughout the whole Expeditionary Force during that month was 12 per cent. approximately.<sup>1</sup> In addition, there must have been numbers of soldiers who concealed the fact of their infection.

Public women in Egypt undergo medical inspection at the hands of the State, and combatant officers, who hitherto had given little consideration to the study of venereal disease, were amazed now to learn that this inspection is illusory. Their surprise was not altogether unreasonable: for each woman passing the weekly test was provided with a card marked *Saine*. If that term had any meaning for the lay mind, it suggested that the possessor of a card was declared officially to be free from disease, and unquestionably that was the belief of the man who consorted with her. But his impression was wrong and the card misleading. Military authority was as slow as the soldier to grasp that fact, and nowhere more so than in Port Said. When the truth was understood it was seen that half-measures were useless. To check disease there was but one course to pursue: declare the women's district 'out of bounds' to the troops. There were other substantial arguments favouring the experiment. Within the same area lived the panderers of all other forms of immorality: within it also squalid drinking-shops still evaded the military restrictions. From

<sup>1</sup> The figures are taken from Colonel Sir James Barrett's book, *A Vision of the Possible* (Chapter III).

these dens to the bagnios was but a step, and the soldier who stupefied his mind in the first, drugged his body in the second.

In European capitals the passing visitor cannot find the streets which vice has appropriated for her own. So would it have been in Port Said but for the pimp who still haunted the respectable quarters of the town. Even in day-time a stranger might well wander throughout Arab Town, where all prostitutes were now congregated, without discovering the object of his quest : at night-time, unaided by a guide, his difficulty was doubled. Night then was the pimp's opportunity. Under cover of the inky darkness which protected Port Said against enemy attack from the air, he would lead the soldier into the quarter. In short, it was clear that so long as the pimp was permitted to ply his trade the troops would follow him. The Provost Marshal quickly drove the fraternity off the streets. Some of its members were imprisoned : others, deaf to repeated warning, were soundly whipped. Then in an unlucky moment General Head-quarters discovered that pimping is no crime under English law, and the Summary Court sitting in Port Said was forbidden to try the offence. It was not easy to understand the reasoning which prompted this disappointing ruling. What had English law to do with the trial and punishment of police offences committed by inhabitants of a country governed by martial law : or why should disreputable rogues, living upon the frailty of women, be protected thus ? Such were the questions which military authority responsible for the health of the troops in Port Said asked at this juncture. They could not sit idly and watch the wreck of their plans, and since remonstrance produced no result they resorted to subterfuge. A local proclamation was issued, whereunder civilians were forbidden to offer their services

as guides in any capacity to the troops. The ruse passed without comment; and, emboldened by initial success, the Port Said Command published a second prohibiting the exposure and sale of obscene photographs. But the Judge Advocate at General Headquarters was not asleep. He regarded with disfavour procedure which sought to evade legal authority. Whispers had reached his ears that Port Said was not over-scrupulous in its methods of obtaining evidence, and the new proclamation was ordered to be withdrawn.<sup>1</sup>

But despite all efforts the incidence of venereal disease admittedly contracted in Port Said still remained high. It was not practicable completely to picquet Arab Town, nor possible to arrest every tout who deliberately pursued his hazardous trade. The troops continued to frequent the quarter, and the hospitals to be filled with victims. The situation seemed despairing when a medical officer boldly advised the trial of prophylactic measures.<sup>2</sup> To encourage men openly to make use of early treatment, and yet forbid them under pain of punishment to consort with women, seemed highly illogical. Yet, if science gave immunity from disease, it were better to accept the inconsistency than helplessly watch the incidence increase. The doubt lay whether prophylaxis was as efficacious as its advocates claimed. Superior authority offered no guidance upon the point: and local commanders were left to grope for

<sup>1</sup> When General Headquarters moved into Palestine the Judge Advocate-General accompanied them, and relaxed his critical review of legal procedure in the Canal Zone. Subordinate commanders issued local proclamations with a good deal of freedom. Port Said, in practice, was governed almost entirely by this expedient. Thus between 1917 and 1919 no less than 50 proclamations addressed to the public were issued by the military authority in that area.

<sup>2</sup> Colonel Sir James Barrett, K.B.E., R.A.M.C., Australian Imperial Forces. The measures at Port Said were exceedingly successful.



facts. Throughout the War the British attitude towards this perplexing problem was hesitating and contradictory. Experience proved that numbers of men would not listen to the dictates of reason or of morality. Their actions were unaffected by fear of physical consequences, and uninfluenced by consciousness of sin. Lectures and sermons alike fell upon deaf ears. Had the individual alone been concerned he might have been left to the retribution which in Egypt inevitably follows pursuit of this type of temptation. But England bore some of the risk: for she could spare no part of her manhood to replace men who from self-indulgence fell out of the ranks. Since other means were unsuccessful, it was incumbent then upon authority to experiment exhaustively in prophylaxis. That course was never followed in Egypt.

## XII

### THE DESERT CAMPAIGNS

THE Commander-in-Chief of the Expeditionary Force was not prepared to allow the enemy their former freedom of initiative in Sinai. Once satisfied of the military weakness of the Turks in the Palestine-Sinai area, he determined boldly to abandon the elaborate defensive works on the Suez Canal, and occupy ground well in advance of that line. In formulating this plan he had two objectives in view: firstly, to keep the Canal out of range of the enemy's artillery fire, and, secondly, to release troops tied to the east bank of the Canal for service elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> He proposed, in fact, to block the approaches across Sinai.

In January 1915 the Turkish Command had selected the central route as their main line of advance upon the Canal, and if incessant efforts during the following summer to improve its marching value were indication of their future intention, it was reasonable to suppose that the second expeditionary corps would be dispatched also by the same route. But General Murray was not unduly impressed with these preparations, and set to work to defeat them. British Intelligence were still convinced that the enemy's choice of approach had been dictated mainly by consideration of water, and asserted that that factor would govern any future decision. Assuming that that inference was correct, conditions in 1916 were far less favourable to the Turks than they had been twelve months

<sup>1</sup> In February there were thirteen mounted or dismounted Divisions serving in Egypt. At the close of March the number had been reduced to seven.

previously. Little rain had fallen over the Peninsula during the winter, and in the central area many of the usual pools were now dry. The natural reservoirs of Moiya el Harab and Er Rigum certainly still contained vast quantities of water, the surplus of the unprecedented downpour of the previous season, and the enemy had built elaborate storage tanks at Hassana and at other points. But the destruction of these receptacles, natural and artificial, was not impossible, and Murray bent his energies to the task. In the space of a few weeks the water was gone. Air raids broke up the storage tanks, and mounted troops followed up that success by draining the rock reservoirs of their contents. Unless the British hypothesis was completely fallacious, the enemy no longer could make use of the central route, and their future approach to the Canal would be confined to the Mediterranean coastline.

Although that line was tactically less favourable for the advance of an army, it possessed at least one considerable merit: the oases at Qatiya and in its vicinity would form admirable places of assembly for a Turkish force designed to raid the Canal.<sup>1</sup> From their objective troops at Qatiya would be only two marches distant: water of a kind was fairly abundant in the locality: and under cover of the palm-trees the enemy might hope to escape observation for some hours. But the permanent occupation of these oases was beyond the power of the Turkish Command to undertake. Sixty miles of desert separated them from the advanced base at El Arish, and the enemy had neither the men nor the material to establish a chain of dépôts over that long stretch. The Turkish Staff were not discouraged by that objection, since they confidently expected the Expeditionary Force to pursue the tactics of their pre-

<sup>1</sup> See Plate I.

decessors, and cling to the banks of the Canal. General Murray had no such intention in mind. Now that he had but one approach to watch, he had sufficient troops to hold an advanced line and also ensure communication between it and the Canal: with the resources of Egypt at his back he was under no anxiety as to supplies. He determined, therefore, to occupy Qatiya, and thus forestall the plans of the enemy.

Although His Majesty's Government at this point of the campaign was not contemplating an offensive in Sinai, yet doubt was expressed whether the Suez Canal was tactically the most desirable line of Egypt's defence. The number of troops required to hold it was so large that it might be worth the risk of crossing Sinai to find a shorter one. One section of military opinion spoke of a new line between El Arish and Kossaima: others more boldly urged an advance into Southern Palestine, until the left flank of the defenders of Egypt rested upon the sea beach at Gaza, and the right at Bir Saba. In these discussions there was always one point on which all were agreed: a forward movement from the Canal was inadvisable unless the railway accompanied each stage of the advance. No officer of the Expeditionary Force held more tenaciously to that opinion than the Commander-in-Chief himself. Close as Qatiya lay to the Canal he would not occupy the locality until the construction of a railway of standard gauge connecting the oases with Qantara had been begun. Then, and then only, did he push into Qatiya a Brigade of Yeomanry.

The Turks had not been idle during 1915. Following the retreat of their army from the Canal the forces in Sinai had been reorganized. Von Kressenstein, the commander of the area, was relieved of administrative work, and a new formation known as 'Desert Lines of Communication' took over from him

that duty. A military railway now traversed Palestine, and its extension across the Peninsula of Sinai was planned. It must be confessed that the rapid construction of the new line reflected credit upon its chief engineer, Meissner Pasha, the well-known German contractor of the Baghdad railway. He had declared in January 1915 that the first train would enter Bir Saba before the last day of the Mohammedan fast of Ramadan, falling that year in October, and he kept his word punctually. The feat was the more notable in view of the fact that the constructional staff was mainly Turkish. Meissner was beset with many other difficulties. His technical assistants were few, the labour was unskilled and unreliable, and the constructional material neither new nor good. Work was often unduly hurried in order to permit troop and supply trains to run over sections, and rolling stock allocated to the engineers frequently was appropriated for other purposes. Altogether the line was constructed under depressing conditions: yet it served its purpose, and it was built to endure. The stations were constructed of stone, and the deep ravines crossed by the permanent way were well bridged. Nominally labour was voluntary, and fairly well paid at the rate of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  bislik (or say 10 piastres) per day. But if report can be trusted, of the 5,000 to 10,000 men employed on the work, many were Jews or Christians forced to give their services, and all did not receive the pay due to them.<sup>1</sup> Their rations were said to be meagre, and desertion in consequence was rife. But the Turkish Command were not wholly to blame for that defect. The food-supply of the civilian population of Palestine was beginning to cause anxiety in the winter of 1915-16. Prices were rising

<sup>1</sup> Meissner was promised a contingent of prisoners of war. But the undertaking was not kept, and the prisoners were diverted to road-making in the Amanus mountain area.

in consequence of scarcity. The presence of the troops increased the number of consumers, and in the early summer the local crops had been ravaged by an incursion of locusts. Where these insects alighted, green blades and shoots vanished in the space of a few hours. Barley, the chief sustenance of the people, suffered terribly.

Lack of material prevented Meissner from continuing the permanent way beyond Bir Saba. That point was reached on the 17th October ; and although some further 90 kilometres of earthwork were completed, the rails were never laid upon them. None the less the German had good reason to be satisfied with his work in Palestine. In all he built 384 kilometres of line. It is true that the railways were laid in areas safe from attack by land and by sea, but the work suffered constant interruption from the air. The French sea-planes operating from Port Said never left the line for long undisturbed. They bombed unmercifully structures and working parties alike. Such was the moral effect which the air raids exercised, that so long as a carrier ship lay off the coast of Palestine labour refused to continue work.

Under other German guidance the Turks also had made persistent efforts to supplement the natural water resources of the Peninsula. Herr Schumacher, a civil engineer of some reputation, and Von Kremy, a geological authority, in the autumn of 1915 went to Sinai to investigate the subject. Their report to Djemal Pasha was more optimistic than the actual conditions appear to warrant. They spoke airily of laying a pipe line across the desert. Technically there would be no difficulty in accomplishing that work, and an inexhaustible supply of potable water existed at Kossaima. But there were no pumps and no piping to be had from Syria or from Palestine, and Germany was unlikely to supply the deficiency.

Schumacher ransacked all Syria to find the required material, and by robbing Aleppo of its drainage installation, and Haifa of its irrigation engines, he succeeded in obtaining 31 kilometres of piping and 17 pumps. For the balance Djemal Pasha looked, but looked in vain, to Berlin. Meantime a third German, in more practical fashion, was studying the water problem of Sinai.<sup>1</sup> Equipped with modern boring plant he prospected for water in every likely locality. The results were not very successful: but the doctor and his assistants sank a large number of new wells, and improved existing watering places in Sinai. Upon his advice, also, the water organization of future raiding expeditions against the Suez Canal was carefully planned.<sup>2</sup> Troughs were made and stored in El Arish,<sup>3</sup> and a water company of 160 rank and file divided into three sections was raised to control the distribution of supplies and to improvise auxiliary wells.<sup>4</sup> But Nature fought against the Turks. Water which is found in the northern area of the Peninsula is so brackish and distasteful that even animals hesitate to drink it.

On the 6th April the 5th Yeomanry Brigade rode unopposed into Qatiya. The commander was in-

<sup>1</sup> Doctor Paul Range of Berlin, delegated by the German Ministry of War. He has written an interesting account of his experiences in *Zwischen Kaukasus und Sinai* (1921).

<sup>2</sup> The details of the daily water rations are interesting:

Camels were allowed	25 litres.
Horses and mules were allowed	30 „
Donkeys were allowed	20 „
Oxen and buffaloes were allowed	35 „
Sheep and goats were allowed	5 „
Turkish troops were allowed	10 „

<sup>3</sup> Two troughs were allotted to each well: filled either by bucket or by pump. From 60 to 100 animals watered at each trough.

<sup>4</sup> A section was supposed to be capable of boring daily four wells of 2½ metres in depth, or three of 3 metres in depth, or two of 4 metres in depth.

structed to cover the working parties on the railway advancing from Qantara to Romani, to protect the topographical and water survey parties in advance of railhead, and to watch the east as far as Bir El Abd. He was forbidden to take the offensive, and, if attacked, directed to fall back upon an entrenched infantry post at Dueidar.<sup>1</sup> These instructions were clear enough: but British Head-quarters underestimated the capacity of the Turk to deliver a surprise attack upon a small and unsupported body of mounted troops. It was improbable that the enemy would permit a permanent occupation of Qatiya without a struggle. Intelligence agents had reported consistently that Von Kressenstein was holding in force the wells on the northern road. It was known, also, that a chain of Bedouin patrols now stretched from the sea through Qatiya to Mukhsheib, and that German aircraft, Circassian cavalry, and a newly raised Camel Corps from Medina recently had reached El Arish. These and other indications pointed to the conclusion that the Turks also were preparing a forward movement.

The Yeomanry had been instructed to retire if seriously attacked: but whether the Brigade, unsupported and occupying an exposed position, would be able to do so at the critical moment depended partly upon the numbers and enterprise of the enemy. It was just conceivable that the latter, taking advantage of surprise, might so entangle the British troops that their orderly withdrawal would become far from easy. The tactical situation, also, was not improved by the dispersion of the Brigade. To fulfil their various duties, and to facilitate watering, units were separated by intervening stretches of yielding sand, into which in places the horses sank up to the hocks. There was some risk in these conditions of squadrons being attacked and defeated in detail. Altogether the

<sup>1</sup> Dispatch of General Sir A. Murray, dated 1st June 1916.



position of the Yeomanry at Qatiya was none too secure, and General Head-quarters, reaching that conclusion a little tardily, ordered two regiments of Australian Light Horse to report at Qatiya by the 24th April. The reinforcements were precisely twenty-four hours too late. The enemy had attacked the position on the preceding day and routed the defenders.

The affair did not shed much lustre upon British arms or upon General Head-quarters. As late as the evening of the 21st, that authority had hesitated to act upon well-authenticated reports that the enemy were in front of Qatiya in greater numbers than an earlier reconnaissance had suggested. Unfortunately the command of the northern section of the Canal Zone had changed hands a few days previously. The Army Corps organization of the Expeditionary Force had been broken up, and the commander of the Port Said section, who was responsible for the conduct of operations at Qatiya, had sailed for home, leaving to his successor a situation which the latter had not brought about. There was nothing to be done for the moment. The Turks, well handled, remained the victors of the engagement. The Yeomen suffered heavily: especially the Gloucesters and Worcesters. The other squadrons got off more lightly, retiring in good order upon Dueidar. That post, held by a small infantry detachment, also had been heavily attacked: but, fighting stoutly, the defenders kept the enemy at bay, and had all the honours of the day. The enemy did not attempt to pursue the mounted troops, and satisfied with their success they retired upon El Arish.<sup>1</sup> Although the public waited some weeks to learn the details of the action at Qatiya, news of

<sup>1</sup> Von Kressenstein gives the strength of the attackers as follows: 2 battalions of infantry, one Arab camel regiment, and 1½ mountain batteries.

the reverse could not be kept secret, and before many hours had passed Cairo was buzzing with rumour and with fierce criticism of a plan which left a weak and isolated party of mounted troops many miles in advance of infantry support. The little burial ground on the scene of the engagement marked the gallantry of the Yeomen. Well might one say of each dead trooper sleeping quietly in the desert sand,

*Qui procul hinc, the legend's writ,  
The Frontier grave is far from here ;  
Qui ante Diem periit  
Sed miles sed pro patria.*

Sinai was not the only anxiety which confronted General Murray in the early months of 1916: he had inherited from his predecessor the legacy of concluding the campaign waged against the Senussi. These remarkable people inhabit the Libyan Desert, south of the provinces of Tripoli and Cyrenaica (or Bengazi as the Turks call the latter), and west of the Egyptian Delta. Italy, who in 1912 wrested the two provinces in question from the Ottoman Empire, had confined her occupation to the coastline, and avoided contact with the Senussi. The latter had watched with anxiety the progress of that campaign. While they dreaded the Christian invader, they bore little love for the Turk. Sheikh El Mahdi, once the head of the sect, had been accustomed to say 'Turk or Christian, I will break both with one and the same blow': but such was his fear of Ottoman ambition that he did not care to venture far out of the Libyan wastes. Mohammed Ben Senussi, founder of the fraternity, was born in Algeria in the first years of last century. Filled with missionary zeal he travelled through Arabia and Egypt, exhorting his co-religionists to strengthen their faith in Islam. As his reputation for piety grew his following increased, until Mohammed Ben con-

ceived the grandiose idea of uniting the Muslims of Northern Africa into one brotherhood, wherein religious and political interests were common to all. He preached, in fact, Pan-Islamism. In course of time the Senussi lost some of their founder's fervour, and established relations with the outer and non-Islamic world. They began to trade. Sid Ahmed, the leader of the sect at the outbreak of war, by repute was both enlightened and honest. He was on friendly terms with the Egyptian and the Sudan Government, and maintained a representative in Alexandria, who as late as July 1915 was corresponding with British military authority in Egypt.

Although peace formally existed between Italy and Turkey since 1913, two years later Ottoman troops were still in the interior of Cyrenaica, the province which marches with the western boundary of Egypt. But the Italians possessed the coastline, and thus prevented the Senussi, whom they regarded as friendly to the Turks, from trading with their chief market, Constantinople. During the summer of 1915 German and Turkish officers joined the Senussi, exhorting them to strike at England, the enemy of Islam, through Egypt. But Sid Ahmed hesitated. He had no quarrel with the British, and no particular affection for Germans. He temporized, therefore, expecting an offer from the former, and a substantial sum of money paid down in 1915 without condition doubtless would have secured the neutrality of the Sheikh. Such a compromise hardly appealed to Italy, also an interested party. The Senussi were a thorn in her side, and she would rejoice if Great Britain boldly plucked it out. While the latter Power was pondering over the point, Germany and Turkey stepped into the breach. Arms, ammunition, and money were sent from Constantinople, and Sid Ahmed was persuaded into action.

In the late autumn it was clear that the Senussi meditated an offensive against Egypt, and as a measure of precaution Egyptian coastguards garrisoning Sollum, some 350 miles to the west of Alexandria, and other frontier posts, were directed to retire. But Sid Ahmed moved too rapidly to permit the orders to take effect. Some of the posts were cut off, and the coastguards forced to surrender: other garrisons deliberately passed over to the enemy. Their defection frightened some Englishmen into a belief that the fellahin would welcome the Senussi as saviours of Egypt. If the officers and rank and file of an armed and disciplined branch of the Government seized the first opportunity to make common cause with the Senussi, it was gravely asserted that the population would do so too. But the impression rested upon the same fallacious reasoning which earlier had deceived the Turk. Others, better acquainted with the true feeling of Egyptians, confidently maintained that Egypt would welcome no invader were he Muslim or Christian. Fervently as her people desired to rid their country of the yoke of Great Britain, they were not prepared to gain that end at the expense of a fresh military occupation: and of the purity of Ottoman intentions Egyptians had become suspicious. The passing over to the Senussi of a few frontier guards was but an ordinary incident of hostilities: no more significant of public sentiment than the desertion of individual sipahis had been of the spirit of the troops composing the Canal Defence.

General Maxwell at once assembled a composite force of British, Dominion, and Indian troops at Mersa Matruh, approximately 150 miles due west of Alexandria, and connected with that city by rail and motor road. The troops engaged in the Western Desert campaign had a less difficult task than the Canal Defence. Gallant and mobile fighters as the Senussi

were,<sup>1</sup> they were inferior to the regular Turkish soldiers whom Djemal Pasha led across Sinai. Nor had Sid Ahmed at his elbow a Von Kressenstein to advise him. Gafar Pasha, the Turkish officer who acted in that capacity, was a poor substitute for a German professional soldier. The Senussi, indifferently trained and equipped, were soundly beaten on each occasion when contact was established. Time and again only the inclement weather saved them from complete disaster. Torrential rain prevented pursuit, and the enemy were able to extricate themselves and the guns from the field of action. Egypt was never in danger. The day indeed has passed when undisciplined Arabs can overwhelm European troops by sheer gallantry. Infantry armed with modern weapons of precision do not need now even to form square in order to repel assault: and the enemy's hidden concentrations in khors or nullahs are detected from the air. The campaign was short. After an indecisive engagement fought in front of Mersa Matruh on the 24th January 1916 the British moved forward to reoccupy Sollum. The Senussi suffered heavy defeat on the 20th February at Agagir, and lost Sollum a fortnight later. Meanwhile they were threatening the oases which lie at varying distances to the west of the Nile. That of Baharia, about 100 miles west of the Egyptian province of the Fayum, was occupied by Sid Ahmed, and the absence of opposition encouraged him to penetrate into Farafra and Dakla, oases situated south of Fayum. To check Senussi raids upon the Nile valley large numbers of British troops were detailed for duty in Upper Egypt. During the early summer of 1916 this detached force was watching and patrolling some 700 miles of the

<sup>1</sup> The author of *An Outline of the Egyptian and Palestine Campaigns, 1914-18*, estimates their strength as 5,000 rifles, a few machine-guns, a detachment of 10-pdr. mountain artillery, and camel transport.

banks of the Nile. But Sid Ahmed and his followers made no further movement: air and armoured car formations had broken their spirit.

To return to the Sinai front. In February 1916 Enver Pasha made a tour of inspection in this theatre of war. While satisfied in existing conditions that a second attack upon Egypt was impracticable, he promised reinforcements if Djemal would entrench himself on the east bank of the Canal and bombard at long range the shipping passing through the channel. General Murray's action forestalled that plan. With the destruction of the natural water-supply in the central area, and the oasis of Romani in the hands of the British, the Turk could no longer approach unopposed and unobserved to within striking distance of the Suez Canal. But Djemal and Von Kressenstein did not abandon all hope. A surprise attack had been successful before: it might again be. Meanwhile the Turkish situation was brighter than it had been in the autumn of 1915 when Djemal had at his disposal only twelve Arab battalions.<sup>1</sup> Welcome reinforcements were arriving. Enver Pasha had been as good as his word, and had dispatched the 3rd Division from Constantinople to Sinai. Berlin, also, had redeemed partially her promise to send assistance. A German squadron of aircraft, two 15-cm. howitzer batteries, and cadres of machine-gun companies reached Bir Saba in April.<sup>2</sup> The new Divisions raised

<sup>1</sup> Of the original force in the Syrian-Palestine area, the 8th, 10th, and 25th Divisions had been dispatched to Gallipoli, and two Divisions of the Thirteenth Corps transferred to Mesopotamia and Bitlis.

<sup>2</sup> Among other details was one of several units, called by the odd title, 'The Pasha Formations', raised for employment in the Eastern theatres of war from selected German troops. The rank and file usually were specialists. Rates of pay and other conditions of service, together with a well-written chapter upon the preservation of health, were embodied in a little booklet, of which each member of a 'Pasha Formation' had a copy.

in Syria during the previous summer had now completed their training, and were moving down to the frontier. At the end of April, British Intelligence placed the enemy's strength in Eastern Sinai or at the advanced bases at 26,000 rifles, seven heavy, thirty-seven field, and six anti-aircraft guns. The German air squadron was a valuable asset. The planes searched out the British positions, mapped, and bombed them. Port Said suffered heavily from their attack. Raid after raid upon that town was made: many casualties occurred: and labour employed in the port grew timid. The German pilots were very daring. One of their number flew successfully to Cairo, circling over the city, and dropping bombs upon its inhabitants.

Meanwhile the British were busily engaged in constructing a defensive line, with the right resting lightly upon Qatiya, the centre on Romani, and the left on the sea-coast at Mahamdiya. The troops suffered much discomfort during this period of preparation. The summer of 1916 was exceptionally hot and damp, and any form of exertion was exhausting. Potable water was short, and flies abundant. It would be difficult to conceive conditions more likely to breed epidemics. Yet there was little sickness among the troops: striking testimony to the efficacy of military sanitation and to the value of timely inoculation. Early in May authentic information was received of the appearance of cholera at El Arish. No human procedure could prevent the infection travelling eastward: but measures were taken at once to give immunity to the troops. Every officer and man serving in the Canal Zone was inoculated within the space of a few days. So successful was this preventive treatment, that the epidemic, when it reached the British position, did little harm. One or two deaths occurred: the rest of the force escaped.

Von Kressenstein now was straining at the leash. He had recently been promoted to the command of the 3rd Division, and confident in the valour of his new troops he anxiously desired to match them against the British. Djemal Pasha appears to have had doubts of the issue of the adventure: but his objections were overruled, and in June Von Kressenstein set about preparing a fresh offensive.<sup>1</sup> Every detail of organization was carefully thought out beforehand. Success in the first engagement would depend largely upon surprise: and immense pains were taken by the Turks to prevent information of the projected attack leaking across Sinai. The labour was well spent, and Von Kressenstein reached Bir El Abd before his departure from El Arish had been signalled by British Intelligence agents. Marching rapidly, the Turkish Corps<sup>2</sup> concentrated at Bir El Abd in the last days of July,<sup>2</sup> and a fortnight later occupied Qatiya. The Command sought to drive back the British right, and get between Romani and Qantara. The plan was soundly conceived, but it had little chance of success: the British possessed the advantage at every

<sup>1</sup> Von Kressenstein gives the field state of his force as follows:

- 3rd Division of infantry.
- Turkish Camel Corps regiment.
- 1st Pasha Formation.
- 1 Air Squadron.
- Cadres and material, 8 machine-gun companies.
- 4 15-cm. field howitzers.
- 2 10-cm. guns.
- 2 21-cm. mortars.
- 4 anti-aircraft guns.
- 2 Trench Mortar Companies.
- Several Mechanical Transport Companies.
- 2 Field Ambulance Companies.
- 2 Austro-Hungarian Mountain Batteries.

In all 16,000 men.

<sup>2</sup> The German-Turkish Command brought with the expedition 2,000 to 3,000 labourers from Palestine to dig entrenchments.



point.<sup>1</sup> Turkish intrepidity and German leadership were of no avail against well-trained British infantry, strongly entrenched, supported by artillery and mounted troops, and under no anxiety for the safety of their communications to the rear and on the flanks. Unable to make any impression upon the defence, and in danger of having his line of retreat pierced by the Australian Light Horse, Von Kressenstein fell back upon Bir El Abd. His troops showed their mettle at each step of the retirement. At Qatiya, Ogratina, and El Abd, successive rearguard actions were fought, and although the Turks suffered heavy casualties, and lost some 4,000 prisoners of war, once more they got away the guns and baggage.

Precisely what the Turkish attack was intended to achieve is obscure. The force was too large for a raid : too small to fight a pitched battle. In describing the campaign Von Kressenstein asserts that it was undertaken firstly in the general interests of the European War, and secondly with the intention of driving the British behind the Canal. But unless completely misinformed by his Intelligence of the strength in numbers and in position of the British at Romani, he could hardly have expected to succeed in the second or tactical objective. Supply difficulties would have obliged him to beat a retreat to El Arish long before he could have overcome the defensive works in front of Qantara. Nor is it easy to perceive how a minor Turkish success in Northern Sinai would affect the fortunes of the European War. Djemal Pasha may have hoped to produce some temporary impression in the Hedjaz : but he could hardly have

<sup>1</sup> The defence consisted of the 42nd Lancashire and the 52nd Lowland Territorial Divisions, and the Mounted Contingent of the Australian Imperial Forces : in all, seven infantry and six mounted brigades, with nine field batteries, altogether 30,000 men (*An Outline of the Egyptian and Palestine Campaigns, 1914-18*).

believed that the Sultan Hussein at that stage would be influenced by so unimportant an incident. It is worthy of note, also, that neither he nor Von Kressenstein, in their respective memoirs, speak of the point as an argument in favour of the dispatch of the expedition against Romani. Common report among the Turkish troops ascribed the origin of the campaign to a very different cause: no less than a desire upon the part of Von Kressenstein to mark his appointment to command a field army. It is not impossible that the senior Turkish officers serving in the Sinai theatre felt some natural soreness from their supersession by a foreigner, and that Von Kressenstein was anxious to prove his fitness for the new post. However that may be, a strange and improbable story, current in every camp, declared the existence of friction between the Turkish officers and their German chief. Von Kressenstein, the gossip went, started his march on Romani without the knowledge or approval of Djemal Pasha. Among those who did not scruple to express their resentment at this audacious action was Sami Bey, Commandant of the Arab Camel Corps. During the engagement at Romani, or later at some point during the retreat, the Bey was covering the exposed flank of the main body. Finding his own unit in danger of being cut off, he turned north to get the support of the column. Von Kressenstein mistook the camel troopers for the enemy, and opened fire upon them: Sami Bey was furious, and accused Von Kressenstein publicly of disloyalty. It is quite possible that a mistake in the identity of the flanking troops was made, and possibly also a court of inquiry was held later to establish the facts. But it is highly unlikely that the court suggested, as gossip gravely declared, that Sami Bey should be given command of a second expedition, and if he succeeded where Von Kressenstein had failed, that the latter should be

stripped of his Turkish rank and decorations, and expelled from Palestine.

The attack upon Romani was the last Turkish enterprise undertaken in Sinai, and the initiative henceforth passed into the hands of the British. General Murray determined to clear the desert of the enemy. His operations were distinguished, as always, with great deliberation. By easy stages the British advanced over the road leading into Palestine, the railway following in rear. On the 20th December El Arish was occupied without opposition, and the mounted troops pushed on to Rafa. But the march could not be continued beyond that post until the enemy had been expelled from Auja and Kossaima, the burden animals rested, and supplies collected at various points. Meanwhile the enemy withdrew to a line resting upon Gaza and Bir Saba.

### XIII

#### CIVIL ADMINISTRATION IN 1916

WHILE the campaign in Sinai was being waged Egypt slumbered happily. The period of economic depression was passing: cotton prices were rising. The State Accounts of the 1915-16 financial year showed a substantial surplus over expenditure,<sup>1</sup> and the Finance Ministry was in a position to frame the new Budget upon more generous lines than its predecessors.<sup>2</sup> Martial law still pressed lightly upon the people, and military requisition of labour and produce was as yet unnecessary. Altogether Egyptians had no reason to complain of their lot, and the Government were equally satisfied. The friendly relations which had existed between the Civil Administration and the Army remained unaltered. Following the departure from Egypt of General Maxwell, his successor in command transferred General Head-quarters from Ismailia to Cairo. Having no desire to interfere with the internal affairs of the country, he was yet prepared to make use of his powers of martial law to assist the Government. His attitude in this respect was consistent to the end. Outside the Canal Zone the military orders and proclamations neither injured individual Egyptians nor hampered the Government in their administration of the country. As in 1915,

<sup>1</sup> £1,160,000, or approximately 13 per cent. of the total revenue.

<sup>2</sup> The decline in the number of seizures made by order of the Ministry of Finance, in order to secure payment of land tax, illustrate the return of prosperity to Egypt. During the season of 1914-15, 42,000 of such seizures were made, the number rising in the following year to 51,000. The situation then began to mend so rapidly that in the ensuing twelve months only 9,500 fellahin were unable to meet their obligation to the State.

martial law constantly intervened to strengthen the hands of the Civil Administration. The treatment of the hashish problem is an instance in point.

The spectacle of Egyptians the worse for drink is rare. The pity is that a similar comment cannot be made of men overtaken by indulgence in hashish, a seductive poison manufactured from the top leaves and tender parts of hemp, which is consumed widely in Egypt by smoking and chewing. Despite Customs guards, heavy consignments of the drug from the Greek islands are boldly landed at some point on the sea-coast, and smuggled into the interior. So lucrative is this illicit trade that the landing of one cargo easily repays the loss by capture of the next two. To diminish the risks incidental to the business, purveyors of hashish seek receivers in unlikely quarters, and many and scandalous are the stories told of Europeans of position, who at one time or other have lent, for a consideration, their names and offices to the trade. War blocked up the ordinary channels for running cargoes into Egypt. Notorious smugglers found their movements restricted by order of military authority, and sailing vessels laden with contraband were stopped on the high seas by naval patrols, the crews questioned, and the craft sent under escort into port. Hashish in these conditions ran short, and its price advanced by leaps and bounds. But the purveyor was not yet defeated. Smuggling, unfortunately, is regarded by too many people, law-abiding in other directions, as a venial crime, and certain officers and members of troop transports running between Egypt and Salonica, a *dépôt* of the trade, fell to the wiles of the tempter. It was hardly surprising that they should do so, since the carriers incurred little risk. They had nothing to do with the hazardous business of getting the stuff through the Customs on shore, and so long as the hashish remained on board it was fairly

safe from detection. Many and ingenious expedients were devised by receivers to hoodwink the guards. A favourite ruse was to conceal a parcel of hashish in the load of a military lorry, and permit the driver to become their unconscious accessory.

Widely spread as the hashish habit is in Egypt, the fine physique of the inhabitants suggests that in moderation its practice cannot be very harmful to health. Unhappily, a victim of the habit too often inclines to excess. Desire becomes craving, and the dose which satisfied him once does so no more. Unable to award adequate punishment, the Egyptian Government has been powerless to repress the trade. The purveyor and the receiver snap their fingers at the risks of detection: for the Capitulations forbid the infliction of a heavier penalty than a fine calculated upon the value of the cargo seized. The new conditions offered the Commander-in-Chief an excuse to intervene. Under a proclamation issued on the 7th July 1916 he declared the importation and possession of hashish to be offences against martial law, and defined substantial punishments for disobedience of the military order. A fine of £1,000, or a term of imprisonment of five years, was no laughing matter, and the most audacious smuggler hesitated to accept the risk. The proclamation was extraordinarily effective. Hashish, which had dropped in value to nearly the pre-war cost, rose immediately, and remained at a figure which placed the drug beyond the reach of the poorer class of consumer.

The phrasing of some of the proclamations issued by General Maxwell bore trace of the hand of the amateur draftsman. Economy of words is commendable, no doubt, in all public documents: but the advantage may be bought too dearly if clarity is sacrificed, or if some aspect of the subject passes unnoticed. Only a mind trained in law can avoid the first difficulty, or

neither their professional knowledge nor their experience qualified them to undertake. To maintain the old standard of legal administration, recourse was had to the expedient of appointing officers who in civilian life followed the pursuit of the law. Not unnaturally the new recruits of the Staff regarded the Judge Advocate-General as the crowning authority in the Army, and desired to refer to his decision knotty points of administration only remotely connected with law. Weak commanders acquiesced in the practice, content to rid themselves of responsibility. Others, bolder, stood out for awhile until they too, placed between the fire of their own adviser and the Judge Advocate, succumbed. The power of the Legal Department at General Head-quarters grew, though the tendency was not altogether good for the discipline of the Army. Anxious to obtain a common standard of punishments, the Department, in ignorance of local conditions, over-rode unhesitatingly the sentences awarded by courts martial. Confirming officers grew nervous of rebuke, and thought more constantly of the Judge Advocate-General's opinion than they did of the discipline of the troops within their command.

In Egypt the Department had the special duty of advising upon the administration of martial law over the civilian population of the country. It attacked the delicate task very properly by informing the public of the nature of their obligations to military authority. A proclamation, issued by the Commander-in-Chief on the 14th May 1916, dealt comprehensively with the point. No officer in future could plead ignorance of his responsibility, and no civilian excuse for unlawful action. Specific prohibitions were enumerated, and conduct of a nature to aid the enemy was explained. Finally, the burden of proof was defined. To the unprofessional mind the provisions seemed explicit enough: but hardly was the proclamation published

than the Judge Advocate-General placed his own interpretation upon some of the provisions. His reasoning was not always convincing to the combatant officer. Under one of the prohibitions persons were forbidden to carry on the business of accepting written communications for delivery to others: presumably in order to protect the military censorship. But, as consequence of that censorship, postal delays in the Canal Zone had become so protracted that correspondents begged passengers travelling on the departure trains to take charge of their letters. Since the provision in question seemed designed to arrest the practice, a watch was set and offenders trapped. But the Judge Advocate-General advised against the convictions, and the sentences were quashed on the ground that the prohibition did not refer to isolated cases wherein no proof of bad faith was shown. The ruling seemed so illogical that even the censors were moved to protest.<sup>1</sup>

With the issue of the proclamation of the 14th May it had become necessary to devise judicial machinery to punish infraction of the provisions. Many of the latter had no relation to Civil Law, even if it had been thought desirable on other grounds to invite Egyptian Tribunals to act. The more serious offences against martial law now were reserved for trial by Military Court; the lesser sent before a Summary Court. Only the Commander-in-Chief could assemble the first: while every subordinate commander had authority to

<sup>1</sup> About this period one military area fell sadly out of favour with the Legal Department at General Head-quarters. An officer, solicitor by profession in a large way of business, had joined the local staff, and enjoyed nothing better than a battle of argument with the Judge Advocate-General. An unusual memory for case law and Acts of Parliament gave him advantage over his opponent, and he used his knowledge unmercifully. But such a struggle in the Army can have only one ending, and this particular officer soon departed to other employment.



statesmen were pondering over social reform, and traders examining the possibilities of post-war markets, the leaders of Egypt clung faithfully to their rut, satisfied if the normal business of the State was punctually conducted, the taxes collected, and the Budget balanced. This indifference to the future should not be harshly judged. The ranks of the Civil Service had been thinned, the financial situation still gave anxiety, and the demands of the British Army upon the resources of the country showed no sign of growing less. Yet some Egyptians were disturbed by the inaction of the Government, and spoke freely of the many and pressing problems crying for solution. The illiteracy of the population, the continuous deterioration in the quality and yield of cotton, the source of Egyptian wealth, the oppressiveness of the Capitulations, and in particular the moribund condition of national industries, clamoured for attention.

Industry, save that of agriculture, has never flourished. Apart from the sugar and cigarette trades pre-war Egypt had none of importance. She threw away her opportunities. The climate, for example, favours production of oranges, and sugar is abundant. Yet every pound of marmalade locally consumed is imported. Excellent cloth is woven, and fine silk spun in the countryside: yet the population of the towns wear clothes of foreign manufacture. Egypt is rich in oil and phosphates, and syndicates have exploited both with varying success over a number of years. But the syndicates are formed of Europeans and financed by foreign capital. No Egyptians will risk money and muscle in such enterprises. Prospecting is too laborious and its profits too speculative to tempt the native capitalist. In short, both traders and consumers look to the importer to satisfy their wants.

But the public had grown uneasy. Not only were prices of all commodities rising, but the quality of

supplies was deteriorating. There was no shortage as yet: if Europe had ceased to trade, merchandise of every description was pouring into the country from the Far East. Japan, in particular, was reaping a rich harvest in the Egyptian market. Flour, matches, tobacco, all articles in fact of luxury or of necessity, were being dumped in the Canal Zone. But the flour lacked the finished fineness of the European type, the matches were inferior, and the tobacco rank. Japan paid little attention to remonstrance on the point. Her traders would not even trouble to pack the wares securely. Flour and matches were contained in bags and crates of such flimsy construction that the coverings broke on handling, and the contents spilt. The purchaser, who stood the loss, complained in vain. He might take or leave what the importer chose to give: for Japan at that period had no competitor. The once lucrative cigarette trade had fallen upon evil days. Supplies of tobacco from Turkish and Greek sources had ceased, and the smokers pulled a wry face at the coarse and expensive substitute produced in Japan. Egyptians, disliking the taste, and annoyed at the cost of the war cigarette, restricted their purchases, or, following the example of the Englishman, smoked American tobacco. Worse still, the export cigarette business had vanished. Germany, a substantial customer, was out of the market; Great Britain was placing few orders; and trading with neutral countries daily was becoming more difficult.

The Egyptian Government was spurred into taking action. They could not transform Egypt into a manufacturing country, nor did they desire to impair the supremacy of agriculture as the national industry. But the moment was opportune to investigate the condition of local handicrafts, to develop existing trade, and open fresh avenues of employment. The Council of Ministers appointed a Commission to examine these

points. The Chairman was an admirable selection.<sup>1</sup> Profoundly interested in the economic progress of the country, he produced a report distinguished by logic and insight, and worthy of the study of his fellow countrymen. The public were genuinely surprised at the variety and number of industries humbly practised in Egypt. But development had always been checked by two factors: firstly, lack of capital, and secondly, the reluctance of the worker to depart from the traditionary methods of his trade. Cromer and Kitchener in turn had attempted to overcome the latter defect. In populous centres technical schools were now firmly established, and a special section of the Ministry of Education was supervising the instruction. But no step had been taken to meet the first difficulty. Provincial councils, who maintained the schools, could not be expected also to provide the graduates with capital, much less to finance entire industries, and no Adviser, or Minister of Finance, had yet had the courage to allocate from the revenues of the State subventions for this purpose. That daring innovation was left to the Chairman of the Commission to execute when later he became the Minister of Finance.

At more than one point in this history reference has been made to the disabilities which the Capitulations impose upon the Egyptian Government. Reforms, highly desirable in the best interests of the country, are blocked by the existence of arbitrary privilege, and judicial and police abuses go unchecked. In humble manner martial law, where it could do so, had striven to redress the inequality between Egyptians and foreigners; but its action necessarily was limited to the suspension of abuses which affected directly or indirectly the health or the discipline of the troops, and its existence was impermanent. When peace succeeded war the Capitulations would reassert their

<sup>1</sup> His Excellency Ismail Sidki Pasha, later Minister of Finance.

authority, and Egypt once more become their prisoner. Great Britain, when announcing the establishment of a Protectorate, had foreseen this contingency. In the Note of the 19th December 1914, addressed to His Highness the Sultan of Egypt, His Majesty's Government solemnly declared that the Capitulations no longer were in harmony with modern conditions, and announced that the revision of the Treaties would be undertaken at the close of war. But reforms of this magnitude require prolonged preliminary study, and neither Great Britain nor Egypt had given indication of concern on that point. The neglect by the first party is perhaps intelligible: it is less easy to explain why the second party, more vitally interested in the reform, waited so long to take any steps to secure redemption of the promise.

Not until March 1917 did the Egyptian Government bestir themselves in the matter. In that month a Commission was appointed to investigate the changes which would become necessary in the existing judicial and legislative conditions of Egyptian Courts when hostilities ceased. The members of the Commission represented every conceivable interest likely to be affected by the changes; their terms of reference were wide, and their authority unlimited. They were empowered to form Sub-Committees, to invite the opinion and criticism of the public upon any doubtful or important point, to suggest to the Government provisional measures, and to draft new laws. In short, the Commission was desired to prepare proposals which would replace the Capitulations. Under the terms of the decree this formidable and comprehensive task rested largely upon the shoulders of the British Judicial Adviser. A better choice could not have been made. Penetrating in intellect and lucid in reasoning, Sir William Brunyate had been pondering profoundly for many years over the subject. His note, 'On the

working of the Capitulations',<sup>1</sup> presents a complete story of the difficulties which the Government of Egypt experiences.

The Egyptian system of justice is based less upon an assumption of the territorial sovereignty of the State than upon the nationality and even the religion of suitors. Thus comes about in the country a jumble of judicial tribunals: Mixed Courts, Consular Courts, Religious Courts, and Egyptian Courts. Until the year 1875 the condition of Egypt judicially almost amounted to chaos. To such a pitch had the Khedive, Ismail Pasha, by extravagance and by misgovernment brought the kingdom, that even Egyptian subjects welcomed the establishment of Mixed Courts as a measure of relief from the prevailing confusion. Broadly speaking, the reform protected European interests. The Mixed Courts adjudicate in civil and commercial suits when one or both of the parties are of foreign nationality. Behind them are the Consular tribunals, each Power exercising criminal jurisdiction over her own nationals, and civil when all parties to a suit are her subjects. At first the Mixed Courts performed judicial duties only: later they were invested with restricted legislative power. Thus in 1914 the magistracy at their discretion could authorize the Egyptian Government to apply various police measures to foreigners. But their executive quality stopped at that point. If legislation of more important nature was contemplated, the Mixed Courts merely studied the proposals of the Government and reported to the Diplomatic Corps.

Under the Anglo-French Convention signed in 1904, Great Britain undertook to respect the rights which France in virtue of usage had acquired in Egypt. In other words, the first guaranteed the

<sup>1</sup> Incorporated in the Report by His Britannic Majesty's Agent and Consul-General upon Egypt in 1904.

permanence of the Capitulations until she was satisfied that foreigners would not suffer from their abolition. Lord Cromer frankly doubted the advent of that day. He conceded the injury wrought in Egypt by the existence of Capitulations: he even declared that foreigners lose more than they gain from their privileged position. But he could not bring himself to believe that Egypt in the near future would be capable of exercising administrative and judicial control over the persons and property of foreigners. It was his fixed conviction that the Capitulations must endure until Egyptians accepted voluntarily a legislature wherein all local interests and all resident nationalities were adequately represented.<sup>1</sup>

The new Commission of Reform started on its labours with enthusiasm, but the task was so immense that a less ambitious programme might have produced more practical result. It became necessary from the complexity of the problem to divide up the work among Sub-Committees, difficult to control or to manipulate. Local jealousies hindered progress, and suspicion grew that vested rights were threatened. There arose frank and hostile criticism of any scheme which placed in the single hands of England the authority hitherto exercised by all Powers. The Anglo-Egyptian proposals on this point were fiercely and unjustly attacked, as designed primarily to secure the substitution of English for French law, or to favour the English Bar at the expense of the foreign. Before the deliberations of the Commission had advanced very far, it was clear that the opposition to reform was stronger than had been anticipated. The foreign community became convinced that their rights were being bartered, and Egyptians murmured

<sup>1</sup> See paragraph 3, Report upon Egypt by H.B.M. Consul and Agent-General, 1904. Also chap. lxii, vol. ii, *Modern Egypt*, by Lord Cromer.

that England was seizing every institution in the country.

If the Commission failed to achieve the success which its labour deserved, the British and Egyptian Governments jointly must bear the blame. The investigation should have been set on foot two years earlier. Not only had the reactionary elements in the country been afforded time to marshal their forces against reform, but the country had become almost hostile to every proposal initiated by Great Britain. What would have been possible in the spring of 1915 was impracticable in 1917. At the earlier period the tragedy of war had numbed men's minds, had stilled private jealousies, and arrested international rivalries. That wholesome feeling was now gone, and cosmopolitan Egypt had resumed her selfish outlook on life. Foreigners and Egyptians alike were only intent upon personal ends: the first, to yield nothing of their privilege, and the second, to thwart Great Britain's administration of the country. Progress and better government were cheerfully sacrificed to these objectives. It was a lamentable misfortune for Egypt. No Commission was ever assembled in Cairo better equipped for its task: no Commission failed more signally to reap the reward of patient work. Yet the labour was not wholly lost. Lord Milner in his mission of 1920 made use of it when framing proposals to give Egypt self-government. History has recorded the answer of the country to his scheme, and the problem of the Capitulations still remains to be solved.

## XIV

### CONTRE-ESPIONAGE

At the outbreak of the War Alexandria became the seaport base of the Army in Egypt. A magnificent harbour, spacious quays, and extensive shed accommodation made the port admirably adapted for the purpose. Its distance from the Canal Zone was inconsiderable and unnoticeable until the arrival in the country of units of the new Expeditionary Force. Then it was discovered that the State Railways had difficulty in carrying vast numbers of men and animals from Alexandria to their destination, and in the autumn of 1917 that difficulty was increased by scarcity of coal and of rolling stock transferred to the Sinai-Palestine system. For other reasons also it was imperative to shorten the line of communication between the Army in Palestine and the sea. Port Said, as an alternative to Alexandria, was considered and rejected. Even if its harbour facilities had been adequate, troops and supplies discharged there still would have to be ferried or marched to Qantara, the starting-point of the railway across Sinai. The longer the problem was studied, the clearer grew the solution: the conversion of Qantara into a sea base. In the twinkling of an eye this strip of barren desert became a great port of discharge for ocean-going steamers and an immense military cantonment. Troop and store transports, tied up at improvised jetties, shot their freight out on to the east bank of the Canal; supply trains from Egypt ran over a bridge which spanned the channel and proceeded into Palestine without breaking bulk; and vast dumps of supplies and stores rose majestically into the skies. The new



Qantara was a daring conception, a tribute to the administrative genius of the man who planned it.<sup>1</sup>

It was well that General Head-quarters had discarded Port Said from consideration: for that port was overwhelmed with commercial business. Hitherto her work had been confined mainly to coaling ships passing east and west: she was undertaking now the new and more onerous responsibilities of discharging and transferring their cargoes to other vessels. What had taken place with troops and labour was repeated with cargo, and Great Britain, France, Italy, and Greece established commercial agencies in the town. The first alone was in a position at the outset to carry out the scheme. The port of Port Said had been in her naval and military occupation since the beginning of hostilities. She was occupying thus all convenient quay spaces, all warehouse accommodation, had appropriated the lion's share of available harbour plant, and finally was the only nationality left at that moment with sufficient shipping to run a ferry service between the Canal and Europe. France first, Italy later, sought to repair the last deficiency by dumping the freight in Port Said. So extensive was the shedding erected for this end, and so profuse the expenditure in other respects, that vague suspicions of France's motive grew up. It was whispered that she had neither intention nor wish to find ships to carry the merchandise further than Egypt, and that her object was to accumulate stocks in that country in order to offer them on the close of the War at extravagant prices to depleted factories in Europe. It was an improbable theory. The roll of French vessels sunk during the late summer of 1917 indicated the straits of Great Britain's ally on the high seas.

Very soon disputes arose in Port Said among the

<sup>1</sup> Lt.-General Sir W. Campbell, K.C.B., now Quartermaster-General to the Forces.

conflicting interests. The shipping community were re-entering their kingdom and again objected to interference from military authority. On earlier occasions differences had sprung up between the two, when the second were accused of the improper use of harbour plant and of extravagant employment of labour. But the quarrels had been composed, and military requisition was now less oppressive and arbitrary than it had been in the past. With the renewal of shipping business the old antagonism broke out afresh. Commerce, supported by the new agencies of France, Italy, and Greece, criticized British military methods unmercifully. Undeniably much of the comment was just: the procedure frequently was uneconomical and unbusinesslike. But the fundamental distinction between civilian work in peace and military in war was forgotten by many critics. In the first, cost must be always the prime consideration; in the second, dispatch. To discharge ships more rapidly the military worked night and day, while others stopped at sundown. But there the advantage in favour of the Army stopped. Shipping firms paid labour by piece-rate, and although a man might earn under that rule a larger sum than he would do under the military custom of a daily wage, yet the greater number of hands employed by the Army, and the smaller output of work, far outweighed that apparent disadvantage. The practice of the latter, in fact, was highly uneconomical. Waste is the spoilt child of an army in the field, and life and money are its playthings. As lives are sacrificed at the front to gain some trifling or temporary advantage, so is money squandered as recklessly in the rear. Nothing is more infectious than extravagance, and the malady spreads until economy becomes unfashionable. What matters expenditure if victory is assisted by it? frequently is said behind the line, and from that costly delusion some responsible

officers never entirely rid themselves. And the business community criticized the scale of naval and military administrative operations less than the disproportionate return upon the outlay. Civilian personnel would be engaged at rates of pay unusual in Egypt, extravagant contracts would be drawn up, and property seized without a proper inventory being made.

In this confusion there was but one sensible course to pursue : establish a new and independent authority over the port. Thus came into being a local Control Board, which served later as the model of similar bodies at Alexandria and Suez. It would be idle to pretend that the early administration of the Board commanded universal approval or cured every defect. The situation had approached too nearly to chaos, and individual selfishness was too pronounced to secure either loyalty or efficiency. Naval and military services were reluctant to forgo the right of arbitrary requisition, and other powerful interests were equally unwilling to waive claims of priority. In this bog of suspicion and prejudice the Board floundered pitifully for a while, and then the common sense of the business community rescued it from disaster. What success was achieved under the scheme in Port Said may be justly attributed to the shipping firms, who surrendered their personal interests in aid of the common good.

Presently the equitable distribution of the resources of the port became subordinate to increased dispatch of shipping ; and since all freights were not of equal importance, each Ally, in turn, established a system of priority of sailings. In endeavouring to conform to the new policy, the members of the Board of Port Said were compelled to favour some firms at the expense of others. It was a delicate and tiresome duty, giving rise to complaint and to the imputation of unworthy motives. Other trouble fell upon the port : military

authority tightened existing restrictions over ingress to the harbour area. The air was full of rumoured attempts of sabotage, and of stories of bombs found in the stokeholds and bunkers of vessels which had coaled last at Port Said. England at this period was moved profoundly by the colossal losses at sea sustained by her commercial marine, and was urging the Government to make the utmost use of ships still afloat, and to safeguard them from attack. The ferry service between East and West and the quicker discharge of vessels were to secure the first; the convoy system to accomplish the second. Conversely, the enemy were encouraged by success to redouble their efforts. Reliable and early news of the movements of Allied shipping became of the highest importance to the enemy commanders: no less urgent was the task laid upon the Allies to prevent that information from reaching the latter. The most simple method of doing so clearly was to exclude from access to the ports all civilians, save those who satisfied authority of their good faith. But unhappily that procedure, even in modified form, was difficult to pursue in Egypt. The discharge, loading, and coaling of ships are performed by Egyptian labour, and to investigate the antecedents of each porter before he began work in the prescribed areas would terribly delay the departure of convoys. A fresh responsibility, therefore, lay upon the naval and military members of the Port Said Control Board. They must persuade authority to take a reasonable view of *contre-espionage* precautions.

The Intelligence Service of an army is divided into two main sections, termed (a) and (b). Broadly speaking, the first collects information about the enemy's plans and forces in the battle area, while the second endeavours to prevent similar news escaping. Intelligence (b) performs, in fact, the quasi-police duties of *contre-espionage*. The work is behind the line

and is uncongenial to many minds. Not unnaturally, the trained members of the Intelligence Service gravitate towards (a), and as the War progressed that tendency became the more marked. In the Egyptian Expeditionary Force the delicate duty of (b) fell gradually into the hands of uninstructed officers who confused military with civil administration business. So long as General Head-quarters remained in Cairo, Intelligence (b) was adequately controlled by wiser and more experienced heads; but once the Commander-in-Chief had departed to Palestine, the branch left in Egypt without guidance usurped authority which fundamentally it was incapable of exercising.

*Contre-espionage* in Egypt grew up in desultory fashion. In close association with the civil administration of the country, Press and Postal censorship had been established, and enemy subjects and suspected Egyptians deported or interned. But little more than those precautions was undertaken during the early months of the War. Head-quarters in Cairo had no staff to spare for ancillary Intelligence duties, and the Government shrank from entering uninvited into fresh responsibilities. Egypt waited until the summer of 1915 to acquire her first lesson in espionage work. There arrived then in Cairo a member of the British Legation in Greece, an officer of outstanding personality and of exceptional flair in intelligence work. Unhappily, the chief German Agent in Athens, thwarted at every turn, had succeeded eventually in getting rid of a more skilful rival. Hurrying across to Egypt to repiece the broken fragments of his various enterprises, this singular genius established a fresh agency, which he called the Eastern Mediterranean Special Service Intelligence Bureau.<sup>1</sup> But the early

<sup>1</sup> An air of mystery enveloped 'Emsib', as the Bureau familiarly was known. The staff spoke of their chief only as 'R': his name was

promise of the bureau was unfulfilled. The founder was summoned to duties at home, and his mantle fell upon the shoulders of others who were unable to sustain the burden. The outward shell of the organization remained, but the soul had vanished. A vast amount of information concerning the career of cosmopolitan soldiers of fortune was collected; but that mechanical result would have hardly satisfied the restless spirit who guided the early fortunes of the venture.

A vigorous control over civilians entering all port areas in Egypt was now instituted; but despite immense pains, the measure at Port Said was never entirely successful. By mixing with labour, a determined person could and doubtless did without difficulty evade the police control. It was impracticable to photograph every one of the 15,000 casual and constantly changing labourers in Port Said, and the metal disks substituted in place of photographs were unsatisfactory as evidence of identity. Work suffered from constant interruption caused by a steady stream of fresh and more stringent instructions from Intelligence (b). Labour grew sullen, and naval, military, and civil employees complained bitterly of the inconvenience which they experienced. But authority only hardened its heart. The toll exacted by submarines upon Allied vessels in the Mediterranean grew heavier, and the general public was uneasy lest the enemy had indirect sources of information concerning shipping movements from Egyptian ports. There is little reason to suppose that the suspicion was founded upon fact: for enemy submarines, lying off the northern mouth of the Suez Canal, had no need to establish communication with the shore. The convoy system saved them that troublesome business. Twice, often never mentioned. The quaint conceit deceived no one in Egypt, and was the cause of innocent amusement to many.

thrice, weekly, great fleets of freight ships with attendant escorts would sail out into the open sea. If the submarine commander could elude the notice of the British sea-going patrols, he had no more to do than await in patience the appearance of the quarry. Not *contre-espionage* on shore, but the Navy afloat robbed the enemy of his prey.

Naval officers serving in Canal waters associated themselves closely with the policy pursued by the military members of the Port Control Board. No doubt ever weakened the conviction of either that the expeditious dispatch of commercial shipping from the Suez Canal Zone must be the first and the supreme consideration of authority, or that dispatch justified taking indirect risk of danger from the shore. Holding this single idea, the two services formed a combination, which General Head-quarters, remote from the actual scene, hesitated to disturb. Rarely has more complete harmony between naval and military authority reigned than at Port Said, and the longer hostilities continued, the closer became that harmony. The two services, embarrassed by the presence of Allied naval and military forces, were working in an area liable to attack by the enemy, and responsibility for defence perforce was divided. In these conditions, opportunities arose daily for one to misunderstand the other, and it would not be out of keeping with a picture frequently and sometimes truly drawn of operations ruined by mutual jealousy, were the history of the Canal Zone also an instance in point. But records and files would not substantiate the fact, and naval and military authority at Port Said had cause to boast proudly that their relations with one another were unmarred by dispute.

Intelligence (b), sitting calmly in Cairo, looked coldly upon the ambition of naval and military authority in the Canal Zone, and would withdraw none

of their measures of *contre-espionage*. In their view dispatch of commercial shipping must be subordinate to security, and in their belief security was best secured in a war port by strict and rigorous application of *contre-espionage*. Thus arose a difference of principle between central and local authority. Neither party would cede from their standpoint, and instructions given from Cairo were set aside deliberately at Port Said. A situation of this nature cannot continue indefinitely. General Head-quarters were forced to intervene, and, examining leisurely in Palestine the point in dispute, finally supported the view of their representatives in Cairo. But the critical moment had been passed safely. The Armistice was signed, and War Control had lost its significance.



## XV

### WAR GRIEVANCES OF EGYPT

FOLLOWING the unsuccessful attacks delivered upon Gaza on the 27th March and the 17th April 1917, the British fell back upon a line parallel with the Turkish position. The local commander of the two operations paid the penalty exacted from leaders who fail in the field, and General Head-quarters, which had come up to the battle area, returned to Cairo. News from the front was vigorously censored, and the truth about the first battle was unknown in Cairo for some days. People were frankly puzzled by the contradictory indications. Warm messages of congratulation, published in the Expeditionary Force Orders from other theatres of war, suggested a brilliant victory: heavy convoys of wounded and the absence of prisoners told another story. Only the actual participants in the fighting were aware of the extent of the disaster: how units had been wiped out, and how objectives had been won one moment only to be abandoned the next. The second attempt to drive the enemy out of Gaza was even less successful than its predecessor. The Turkish Command had made good use of the intervening period to reinforce and strengthen their position, and again the casualty returns made sad reading for British eyes. Thus, facing one another, and separated only by a few kilometres of open country, the two armies spent the summer of 1917; repeating with rôles reversed the situation which two years previously had existed on the Canal. Neither side for the moment was strong enough to dislodge the other from its defences.

But if the actual fighting in front of Gaza had gone in favour of the Turks, they had little comfort to

extract from the fact. Deficiencies in ammunition and supplies and insecurity of communications caused anxiety. The British destroyed the railways, blew up viaducts and bridges, and burnt supply dumps, until Djemal Pasha nervously ordered the civilian population to evacuate Jaffa and Jerusalem. But all was not well with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. If communications were safe and supplies abundant, the spirit of the fighting troops was less promising. Position warfare was affecting the morale of the foot-soldier. The mounted troops alone were taking part in the raids: the infantry remained in their entrenchments, inactive spectators of the operations. An air of lethargy stole over the force, and officers and men acted and spoke as if the business of war had become a phantasm. An impression pervaded the Army that a point was reached in the campaign when nothing more would happen. But destiny already was plotting a new turn of affairs. In the hope of relieving pressure upon Russia in the Caucasus and of delaying the Turkish advance upon Baghdad, Great Britain was about to take the offensive in Palestine. The history of that offensive, and of the triumph of British arms, lies outside the scope of this book; but the policy led to changes in the Expeditionary Force, which later produced grave and unexpected consequences to Egypt. General Murray was relieved of the command, and his successor at once transferred the seat of military authority from Cairo into Palestine. Upon the propriety of the latter step there were no two opinions in the Expeditionary Force. The troops had not understood, once Egypt was free from invasion, why General Head-quarters still remained 300 miles distant from the front. But critics forgot that General Murray had the dual task of commanding an army far in advance of its base, and of applying martial law to a country of doubtful loyalty. To feed that army he

had to plan and maintain a long line of communications: to use martial law discreetly he had to watch the ebb and flow of public opinion. Before deciding, then, whether the Commander-in-Chief was justified or not in remaining in Cairo, these considerations must be weighed carefully.

The campaign in Palestine was about to enter upon a new phase. In place of the former leisurely passage across Sinai the Expeditionary Force would advance by a series of rapid movements, each stoutly opposed. Mobility in those conditions being of paramount importance, success would depend largely upon the skilful employment of mounted troops. Reasons of this nature pointed to the selection of a cavalry soldier to succeed Murray, and the choice fell upon General Sir E. Allenby, then commanding the 3rd British Army in France.<sup>1</sup>

General Head-quarters moved into the battle area, and brought fresh energy into the Expeditionary Force. The curt and contemptuous comments of the new Commander-in-Chief upon the drill and the bearing of the rank and file produced effect, while his vigorous personality infused new life into the officers. Other causes indirectly contributed in the higher ranks to the birth of a new spirit. The British Army was passing through a period of transition, wherein every rank was losing some of its former attributions and gaining new ones. The Staff did not escape the influence of the hour. Hitherto, in certain respects, German tradition had been followed, and the senior staff officer of an army in the field wielded authority hardly inferior to that of its Commander-in-Chief. The practice no doubt had many merits, but it was not in consonance with British taste or custom. German and British conditions were not analogous. When Germany took

<sup>1</sup> General Allenby assumed command of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force on 27th June 1917.

the field the Kaiser marched with the armies as the supreme military authority. But neither he nor the Princes directed military operations or conducted the strategy of the war. Those responsibilities rested upon the shoulders of professional soldiers, and the royalties were but pretentious figure-heads. While the British practice never reached those extreme lengths, certain of the earlier commanders in the War notoriously permitted the chiefs of staff to usurp excessive authority. Friction was bred in these conditions, especially in matters of patronage, when imperious officers claimed for their own nominees appointments which dealt with duties other than those appertaining to operations. Later Commanders-in-Chief had less sympathy with foreign tradition, and thus arose in military circles during the closing stages of the War the common and suggestive saying that so and so was his own Chief of Staff. Of no leader was this remark more frequently made than of General Allenby.

The transfer of military operations from Sinai to Palestine brought about a change in Egyptian attitude towards the War. Hitherto, Egypt had met unprotestingly the demands of Great Britain for labour and supplies: but once the last Turkish soldier was expelled from Sinai she was reluctant to assist further. The Egyptian nation had no interest in the prosecution of a campaign in distant Palestine: British successes in that theatre would bring them no gain, British reverses no loss. In short, at this point Egyptians desired to terminate their connexion with war. But beyond that vague wish public opinion in the earlier months of 1917 had formulated no definite opinion upon their future relations with Great Britain. Unhappily, military authority in Cairo marking the birth of restlessness misread its origin and magnified its importance. The old spirit of tolerance, practised so sedulously by General Maxwell, gave place to one of

suspicion, and the disinclination of Egypt to share the burden of military operations outside her territory was construed as hostility towards Great Britain. Insensibly martial law became an instrument of repression, and the solemn promises made at its declaration faded from memory.

But however ardently Egyptians may have desired at this point to withdraw from war, they had little chance of being permitted to do so. Great Britain, suffering from a diminishing manhood, barely could feed and maintain her armies in France. She had no surplus production of food or surplus labour to send to the East, and held that Expeditionary Forces operating there must find these requirements from their respective areas. Simultaneously the Army in Palestine was being largely increased. Reinforcements from other theatres of war were reaching it, and every soldier who could be spared from garrison duty on the Nile was being sent to the front. In these conditions it was plain that further and greater sacrifices would be required from Egypt.

There was no reason to believe that Egypt would not respond to the appeal. Her resources were intact, her temper submissive, and her administration under the control of Englishmen. Finally, the behaviour of the people suggested no sympathy with the enemy or intention to injure the cause of Great Britain in the field. None the less the situation was approaching a point of delicacy. On the one hand, Egypt was growing restless: on the other, Great Britain, despite her promise that Egyptians would not be called upon to take part in the War, was about to call upon their assistance in a greater degree than before. At no period in the history of the Occupation was British statesmanship more needed in Cairo: at no moment in the history of the campaign was a fresh and frank declaration of British requirements from Egypt more

desirable. Neither was forthcoming. Some of the measures which were introduced at the instance of military authority in the years 1917 and 1918 were necessary in the interests of the War: the wisdom of others was more questionable. Among those of the latter type was the order issued on the 17th May 1917 requiring Egyptians to surrender their arms. Prudent Englishmen with experience of local conditions shook their heads, doubting the discretion of a general measure of disarmament at this period, and uncertain whether Egypt would obey the instruction. The Government who published the law took no risk on either point. The preamble stated in unmistakable language that the law was promulgated at the request of military authority.<sup>1</sup>

In form the new Arms Law differed little from a previous Act imposed upon Egypt in 1904 in the hope of improving the then deplorable state of public security. Under that law no Egyptian was permitted to possess arms unless the State authorized him to do so. It was one of a series of experiments introduced at that period with the same object, and succeeding no better. Agricultural Egypt was terribly lawless. Improvements in the conditions of service of the uniformed police forces, and of the village watchmen, or ghafirs, had brought about no reduction in crime, and the native magistracy, although invested with extended authority, used their powers ineffectively. Lord Cromer and his responsible subordinates in despair bethought themselves of an Arms Law. The step was not taken too soon. Every Egyptian in the

<sup>1</sup> The Preamble ran as follows :

‘ Nous, Sultan d’Egypte ;

Vu la loi No. 16 de 1904 sur la détention et le port d’armes ; considérant la nécessité de rendre plus générale et plus efficace la prohibition de la détention et du port d’armes, et d’autoriser des mesures extraordinaires pour le désarmement du pays, conformément à l’avis de l’Autorité Militaire . . . ’

country was going about armed to the teeth : to leave his weapons at home was to court trouble. Even in his dwelling he was not always safe. Bands of brigands still roamed about the country, and every house was shuttered and barred at sundown. It seemed, indeed, that the richer the country grew the less respect was paid to life and property. The cause of this apparent paradox lay presumably in the fact that education had not kept pace with the increase of prosperity. Except in Cairo and Alexandria, there were no secondary and but few primary schools. Here and there some provincial Notable, more public spirited than his fellows, had built a village school ; but elsewhere the children of the fellah grew into manhood illiterate and ignorant of the duties of citizenship.

The original Arms Law, in theory, was admirable. In future only the most respectable members of society would be permitted to carry arms, the bulk of the population being forbidden to possess them. Every individual was called upon to surrender his weapon. If investigation disclosed the owner to be of irreproachable character, the arm was restored to him : if the reverse, it was confiscated. Most fellahin declined to run this risk, and prudently burying their weapons they took no notice of the Government's invitation. Thus in practice the Arms Law of 1904 was disappointing. The number of weapons in the countryside was not diminished, crime was not reduced, and no better protection than in the past afforded to respectable persons.

The preamble of the new law made it clear that the measure had no connexion with domestic crime in Egypt. Disarmament of the country as a military precaution was the objective aimed at, and the law exempted no one but Princes of the Sultanic family, Ministers, and a few members of the Civil Service. Every type of weapon fell within the prohibition :

even such playthings as swordsticks or knuckle-dusters were not excluded. The population were invited to surrender their arms under heavy penalties. Military authority was in deadly earnest, and the law authorized the civil police to conduct domiciliary searches in order to discover and to seize weapons. Egypt was startled and affronted by her subjection to the indignity of disarmament. She had done nothing to deserve the dishonour. She had broken no vow: had committed no offence. In reward she was reproached with disloyalty and regarded with suspicion. Her vanity was sorely hurt. Men of moderate opinion recanted their belief in British fair play: those advanced in views became more embittered.

Whether the Commander-in-Chief was well advised in his action is at least arguable. There are indications which suggest that he himself was doubtful upon the point. It is significant, for example, that he preferred to carry out his wishes through the agency of the Egyptian Government, and not under a military proclamation. In theory the Commander-in-Chief was perfectly justified in requiring the disarmament of the Egyptian population. It is an elementary duty of the leader of an army to preserve the fighting line from trouble in the rear, and the Expeditionary Force, operating in Palestine, required special measures to protect its communications. But other considerations also deserved attention. Partial disarmament would be of no use: and grave doubt was expressed whether Egyptians would give up their weapons, or, in the alternative, whether the native police would and could compel the countryside to do so. It was possible that the fellah, nervous of his neighbour, would keep his armoury intact at all costs. In short, there was no reason to suppose that the new Arms Law would be better obeyed than its predecessor in 1904 had been. Further, if military authority by the step provoked



Egypt to anger, as many men of experience believed, the country would be in no temper to submit patiently to increased demands from the Army upon her labour and food supplies. It is a matter of regret that military authority did not prevail upon the Egyptian Government to promulgate the law under the excuse of arresting the incidence of agrarian crime. The cloak would have served to conceal from the nation the naked truth.

So saturated, in the fourth year of hostilities, were all combatants with the spirit of war that military considerations alone dominated every situation, political and economic. The old-fashioned doctrine that individual property is sacred had long since been jettisoned in Europe. What the State required it seized without consulting the wishes of the owner. No man now could call either life or property his own. Great Britain had rationed the population in food, had interfered with private enterprise, and had driven her sons into battle areas and her daughters into munition services. Other countries within the orbit of war had fared no better, and Egypt, which hitherto almost alone had escaped suffering, now was about to meet the same experience. So far she had been fortunate. If the choice between peace and war had been taken out of her hands, at least she had enjoyed a partnership which saved the country from invasion. But from the association she had lost the last remaining vestige of political independence, and the moment was approaching when she would also be called upon to make more material sacrifices. It is difficult at this point of their history to feel no sympathy for Egyptians. Peaceful by disposition, interested only in their own occupations, they had asked no more from Fate than to be left to their own devices, and Fate turned a deaf ear to the appeal.

From Egypt the Army in Palestine required labour,

food, and animals. In its early history the Expeditionary Force had experienced no great trouble in obtaining adequate and punctual provision of these needs ; but as the year 1916 merged into its successor difficulties began to accumulate. The greater distance of the front from Cairo and the increased strength of the Army brought about further calls upon Egypt at a moment when sources of supply in that country showed signs of exhaustion. Very shortly the Civil Administration, which had undertaken to provide labour, would be confronted with the fact that recruits were not coming forward in sufficient number to meet the military requirements. Trouble in connexion with other supplies, also, was gathering, and only in the close co-operation existing between the Army and the Civil Administration was there promise for the future. This co-operation was an important factor in the situation. So long as the seat of military authority remained in Cairo, the Egyptian Government could rely upon receiving early news of successive military developments, and upon opportunities of conferring daily with the responsible heads of Army services. The move of General Head-quarters into Palestine put an end to this intimate relationship. Military plans and information were no longer communicated to the Civil Administration, and the Commander-in-Chief and his senior staff officers rarely visited Cairo. The Expeditionary Force also had undergone complete reorganization, existing formations being broken up, and new ones taking their places. First Echelon with lines of communication extended now from the battle area to the Suez Canal ; second Echelon, with Head-quarters in Cairo, garrisoned Egypt ; and third Echelon was in Alexandria. Heavy responsibilities fell upon second Echelon. It had a dual duty to perform : to provide the fighting line with supplies, and to maintain order in Egypt. Nominally, the base of the Expedi-

tionary Force in Palestine was the line of the Canal : in practice it was the Delta. Nominally the Commander-in-Chief exercised the powers of martial law : in practice his subordinate in Cairo did so. It was inevitable that the former should delegate part of his authority to the second. A Commander-in-Chief and a General Head-quarters engaged in planning and making war in distant Palestine had no leisure to meddle in the domestic issues of Egypt. Their visits to the capital were infrequent, and upon private rather than upon public business.

To the Egyptian Government the new military organization was not very welcome. With great pains the Civil Service had mastered the idiosyncrasies of one machine : they were decidedly unwilling to experiment with a second. There was the further and perfectly legitimate annoyance that henceforth the Government must negotiate with subordinate officers, less experienced and invested with less authority than a General Head-quarters. The staff of a second Echelon rarely reach the standard required from a first. In war the best brains of the Army necessarily are marked for employment with General Head-quarters, or with staffs of fighting formations, while lines of communication, and Echelons in rear, must put up with the second rate. There were, no doubt, in Egypt as elsewhere, during the War, noticeable exceptions to this general rule : but broadly speaking it was the principle, and the correct principle, which governed the posting of staff officers in the Expeditionary Force.

In Chapter X, when describing Egypt's early contribution to the defence of the Suez Canal, the origin and duties of the Labour and the Camel Transport Corps were described briefly, and an undertaking was given that the recruiting difficulties of the two organizations would be analysed at a later stage. The present is a convenient point to redeem that pledge.

The procedure employed unquestionably obtained the number of men required by the Army: but the practice inflicted injury upon individual members of the population, and between procedure and practice the credit of England suffered. The fellah is a creature of puzzling contradictions and surprises. A grave face masks an emotional nature, and an air of ingenuous simplicity a cunning mind: a submissive attitude conceals a fierce hatred of authority, and loud talk of justice a lawless disposition. Only in two respects is he single-minded or consistent. Nothing can alter his passionate love for the soil, or lessen his profound affection for the family. So long as he makes a bare living out of his patrimony he will not move from the village: and neither ambition nor fortune will shake that determination. Shakespeare's lines

Who doth ambition shun,  
And loves to live i' the sun  
Seeking the food he eats,  
And pleased with what he gets—

fit no countryman better than the Egyptian fellah.

In their endeavour to maintain the establishments of the Labour and the Camel Transport Corps, both the Government and the Army sadly miscalculated the strength of Egyptian prejudice. The second thought, honestly enough, that Egyptians would welcome an opportunity of taking an active part in the War; while the first, who could have been under no illusion upon that point, placed too great confidence in the submissiveness of fellahin to authority. Both conceptions were inaccurate. No section of the community in the winter of 1917-18 voluntarily would offer assistance to England in Egypt, and no fellah submit unprotestingly to the tyranny of a new form of the *Corvée*. Strange events, no doubt, would have come to pass had the enemy prolonged resistance into

1920. Great Britain may have become bankrupt, or Germany perished from starvation. Upon such wide issues speculation is fruitless, but at least of Egypt it may be predicted with some assurance that the British Army must have sought labour elsewhere than from that country. The fellahin would have preferred to die rather than continue to swell the ranks of the auxiliary corps.

In the early summer of 1917 it was plain that a crisis was approaching which threatened the existence of the Labour and the Camel Transport Corps. The supply of wastrels, men with no visible means of subsistence, was coming to an end; the few fellahin and Saidi serving would enter into no fresh engagements; and there were no volunteers to take their places. Accident rendered the situation more embarrassing. Reluctantly, in order to complete urgent work, the Army was compelled to detain in Palestine a few gangs beyond the period (three months) of the contract. This unfortunate necessity coincided with a general but unavoidable delay in repatriating other labour. The Sinai railway, barely capable of coping with the heavy troop and supply movements to and from the Canal, had no rolling stock to spare for conveyance of fellahin; and gangs, who had completed their engagement, were forced to await at railhead the arrival of reliefs. The ignorant Egyptian could not understand these complications. Singularly inexact himself, he expects from others strict adherence to their word, and he resented fiercely his unlawful detention in the Corps. Once back in the village he condemned loudly the deceit which had been practised upon him, and thus became an insidious enemy of the labour recruiting officer.

Although military authority, dropping their old optimism, now recommended measures of compulsion, the Egyptian Government steadily refused to settle the

recruiting problem in that way. They were confident that provincial officials under pressure would secure the required numbers, and declined to consider proposals which were based upon the liability of every Egyptian to serve in the national army. The exact grounds of their objection have never been made public. As a practical solution of the difficulty the suggestion does not appear to be improper. About 130,000 young men become liable under the Conscription Law for military service each year, of whom 60,000 to 80,000 undergo the ordeal of the ballot. Since the Egyptian Army requires less than 3,000 conscripts annually, it follows that a large balance is available for other purposes. To oblige that surplus manhood of the country to serve in one of the two auxiliary units of the Expeditionary Force for very limited periods and at high rates of pay, may have been an impolitic but cannot fairly be described as a harsh measure. At the worst it would have provided only a nine days' excitement in the country; at the best it would have distributed the burden of service equitably over the community. It is difficult to understand why the Egyptian Government to the end clung to the barbarous and arbitrary methods practiced by the *Corvée*, and, unjustly, Great Britain has been saddled with the mistake. In the proclamation of the 7th November 1914 the General Officer Commanding in Egypt had pledged his word that Egyptians would be called upon to give no aid in the war with Turkey, and in forcing the Government to raise and maintain auxiliary corps, his successor three years later was breaking that undertaking. Yet it was not England but Egypt who deliberately closed her eyes to the defects of the recruiting organization, and watched unmoved its unjust incidence. None the less, the former cannot be absolved from blame. She was not ignorant of Egypt's dilemma, and would have acted

more adroitly had she confessed frankly at this point her inability to keep the promise made on the 7th November 1914. From that recantation it would have been a short step to define her future requirements, and the price which she was prepared to pay for them. To secure autonomy the Egyptian nation would have submitted cheerfully and voluntarily to heavy sacrifice.

Again and again, to no purpose, the Army counselled that service in the Egyptian Labour Corps should be obligatory upon the nation. Every month a call for more recruits was sounded. For that of May 1917, 17,000 were wanted: in June 1918 the figures had risen to 26,000. The organization was extravagant. Of the short term (originally three, increased later to four months) of the engagement a substantial part frequently was consumed in transporting the fellahin from and to their villages. But neither the Government nor the Army dared increase the period lest worse should befall them. The Council of Ministers bethought themselves of every expedient which would attract recruits. On the 20th October 1917, for example, the public were informed that twelve months continuous service in any recognized auxiliary corps would exempt an Egyptian from all future obligations under the Conscription Law. Unhappily, inducements of this character produced no effect, and the Egyptian Government, having ruled out of consideration open methods of compulsion, were forced in the end to resort to less creditable measures. Unshamedly the *Corvée* was reintroduced.<sup>1</sup> Each

<sup>1</sup> The Egyptian Government did not mince words, as the following communication, typical of many, shows:

‘Le Mudir de . . .

Monsieur X, ayant présenté au Ministère une liste portant les noms des villages sus-indiqués, a fait savoir que jusqu'à présent aucune personne de ces villages ne s'est inscrite au Labour Corps.

Étant donné les ordres réitératifs, émanant du Gouvernement, encourageant et engageant la population à s'inscrire au service en

Mudir was required to produce from his province a fixed number of men, and failure brought upon him a pretty sharp rebuke. How recruits were got was left to the discretion of the provincial officials, who were not slow to take the hint. Village sheikhs chose the victims as they thought fit and without interference. Many an old score was thus paid off, and agricultural Egypt became rent with feud. Families denounced families, and corruption poisoned the air. Fellahin who could not or would not pay for exemption, frequently were the first to be taken : personal enemies of village authority, the next. In some localities the practice was reminiscent of the naval press gang. Country folk attending the local markets were rounded up and sent to the nearest labour dépôt. While the majority accepted their fate with resignation, a few showed fight, and others sought sanctuary in neighbouring districts. But the end of all was the same. Resistance would be overcome, and fugitives dispatched to the recruiting officer.

Certain elements of the Civil Service, both British and Egyptian, looked sadly on these scenes. But their hands were tied and their silent disapproval was unnoticed. They could neither alter the policy nor investigate personally every case of alleged oppression. Some endeavoured to remedy flagrant injustice, and others stood between fellahin and village authority.

question, on ne s'attendait guère à voir un seul village ne présentant personne à l'enrôlement. C'est pourquoi j'ai été étonné de constater que les villages sus-nommés étaient de ce genre.

Je vous recommande, Monsieur le Mudir, de prendre toute mesure nécessaire pour la fourniture des personnes requises des villages dont il s'agit, et d'avertir les Omdehs de ces villages que les peines les plus sévères leur seront appliquées s'ils apportent de la négligence dans cette question. En outre, vous aviserez particulièrement le Ministère du nombre présenté par chacun de ces villages jusqu'à la fin du mois courant.

Mai, 1918.

Signé, le Ministre.<sup>3</sup>



But their powers were limited, and Englishmen, in particular, bidden remember that their own country was fighting for her existence. On the other hand, one cannot but admire the unflinching resolution displayed by the Egyptian Government during the critical years of 1917 and 1918. Looking neither to the right nor the left, they pursued their chosen path unhesitatingly to the end. Wisely or foolishly, the Government had declined deliberately to make use either of the Conscription Law or of the Nile Register:<sup>1</sup> and from that decision no argument would move them. Commanders-in-Chief, dissatisfied with the result, might recommend compulsion, and the Civil Service, deploring the procedure, predict gloomy consequences: authority would listen to neither.

On top of the difficulties of maintaining labour establishments the Government had to comply with growing demands from the Army for Egyptian camels. The percentage of animal casualties in the Auxiliary Transport Corps was rising, and each forward movement made by the British in Palestine was marked by a fresh expansion of that service. General Headquarters sought to lessen the strain by buying remounts elsewhere: but the prohibitive cost of the foreign camel when brought to the Suez Canal, and lack of marine transport to move the beast from the port of purchase, kept the experiment within narrow limits. In claiming from Egypt the camels required, military authority logically was on firmer ground than in demanding men for labour units. The right of an army in the field to requisition the property of individuals cannot be seriously challenged; nor was it possible for Egyptians to assert that the action was

<sup>1</sup> The Nile Register, the only relic left of the *Corvée*, contains the names of able-bodied fellahin living within a reasonable distance of the Nile. During flood time strong parties of men watch, day and night, for any sign of weakness in the banks of the river.

opposed to any undertaking given, or implied, by Great Britain on the declaration of war with Turkey. The contrary was the case, and Egypt had been duly warned. In the proclamation dated 2nd November 1914 the commander of His Majesty's Forces in the country explicitly reserved the right to requisition, if and when the military situation required him to do so.

But to the fellah the beast of the field is little less sacred than his son or daughter : he cannot accomplish his daily round of work without the aid of the first. In Egypt, a country of no metalled roads and of few railways, the cultivator must move the crops from field to market by camel, and only under severe economic pressure will he sell his means of transport. He was little likely to do so voluntarily in 1917. Farming again had become a profitable pursuit, and fellahin were buyers rather than sellers of agricultural stock. Early in the preceding year an announcement that the Army desired to purchase camels met with no response : and only through indirect pressure upon owners did the Purchasing Commissions succeed in securing 12,000 out of 65,000 male camels registered throughout Egypt. Wealthy landlords, and village elders, kept their beasts safely in stable : only the humble peasant was driven to produce his property. Circulars addressed to the Mudirs urging them to take stringent measures against all persons, irrespective of their station in life, who refused to produce their camels, staved off the crisis for a while : but presently it was doubtful if the numbers of male camels in Egypt was sufficient to meet both domestic and military requirements. In these conditions the Army claimed the right to requisition a proportion of the female. The decision aroused a storm of excitement in the countryside. It was hardship enough to lose the male beast : to be robbed of the female was an intolerable grievance. As the year 1917 drew to its end, Pur-

chasing Commissions urged that more drastic measures than the issue of confidential circulars to Mudirs should be applied, and a notice published by military authority on the 11th November 1917 commanded Egyptians to produce their beasts. Transfer of ownership and private sale meanwhile were forbidden, and camels were branded 'fit' or 'unfit' as the case might be. The first were taken or reserved for military service: the second left to the agriculturist.

Donkeys also were included in the notice. Wastage among horses of the mounted troops campaigning in Palestine almost approached that of camels of the Transport Corps, and the mounted division of 1916 had expanded into a cavalry corps. Since Egypt could supply no remounts, General Head-quarters endeavoured to economize horseflesh in every direction. Officers serving behind the line were bidden to reduce the regulation number of their chargers: others serving in non-combatant capacities were supplied with donkeys in place of horses. There was much to be said in favour of both orders. Chargers are unnecessary to officers permanently stationed at bases, and donkeys do well in Sinai and in parts of Palestine. Unless hurried beyond their customary pace they are as enduring, and require less care and less food than horses.

But the increased number of animals in charge of the Expeditionary Force threw heavy responsibilities upon the supply authority. Fodder and grain are bulky commodities, and Great Britain had no shipping to spare for their transport overseas. She looked, therefore, confidently to Egypt to supply these needs to the troops. Unhappily, the Egyptian agriculturist did not take the same view of his duty. For many months the Army had been unable to purchase produce at tariff rates, and a point was now reached when dealers refused to make forward contracts. There was some

cause for their reluctance. Cultivators, marking the upward movement in world's prices, again were holding up stocks. In 1915 the same situation had arisen and been overcome through the good offices of the Egyptian Government. Now the Army appealed afresh to that authority, and uncomplainingly the latter accepted the burden. To give the Civil Administration the necessary power, the Commander-in-Chief invested their representatives with powers under martial law.

The Government also were by no means easy upon the subject of their own food-supply. Since the restrictions imposed upon cotton planting in 1915, no practical step had been taken to increase stocks. The tendency to grow cotton in place of cereals had returned with renewed vigour,<sup>1</sup> and a discouraging wheat crop of 1917 had resulted. Further appeals to agriculturists to adopt a less selfish policy were recognized as useless, and in despair the Government had nominated a Food Adviser. The step was not very successful. What Egypt wanted at that point was not an Adviser, but a Dictator. The occupant of the post, finding his independence hampered, resigned, and the harassed Ministers substituted a Control Board. But before the Adviser left he succeeded at least in persuading the Government again to limit the area of the coming cotton crop. In a decree dated the 8th September 1917 the Council of Ministers spoke in no uncertain tone of the critical position of the national food-supply.<sup>2</sup> The country was warned that the existing production of cereals was insufficient for the needs of the population, and any pretence that restriction was intended

<sup>1</sup> The percentage of cotton to the crop area of perennially irrigated land increased from 25 in 1894 to 44 in 1914. In the next four years the respective percentages were as follows: 28 in 1915 (planting restricted), 40 in 1916, 39 in 1917, and 31 in 1918 (planting restricted).

<sup>2</sup> The cultivation of cotton in the basin areas of Upper Egypt was prohibited, and restricted elsewhere to one-third of the cultivable land.

to promote higher yields of cotton in the future was dropped. Yet the Prime Minister would not point the moral by inviting martial law to punish adequately offences under the decree. A fine of £E.1 was unlikely to stop unlawful planting when cotton prices were rising fast in foreign markets. From 12 dollars a kantar in the winter of 1914-15, prices had advanced in the spring of 1917 to 39, and there was no sign to mark that the top had been yet reached. If further inducement was needed to disregard the decree, it arose out of the knowledge that cotton could not be tariffed. No matter how high the world's prices of cereals and pulses might rise, the Egyptian agriculturist was aware that the Government would not allow him to share in the harvest. Tariffs would control local prices, and restrictions upon export assure local supplies.

While the areas under wheat, maize, and barley were substantially larger in 1918 than those of the preceding year, wherein no restriction of cotton planting was in force, yet they were disappointingly inferior to the areas of 1915. Cultivators had reverted to their former practice. But other result could hardly be expected in view of the fact that the Government offered no reward for an increased production of cereals. A simple and practical method of doing so would have been the purchase of the whole, or part, of the 1918 wheat and maize crops at prices which would have satisfied the producers. The State then would have resold at reduced rates to town consumers, and stabilized prices throughout Egypt. A transaction of this nature no doubt would have been costly; but the national resources in 1918 were healthy enough to bear the burden.<sup>1</sup> The Government did not take advantage of the opportunity.

<sup>1</sup> There had been handsome surpluses of revenue over expenditure. That of the financial year 1915-16 amounted to £E.1,160,000;

At least the sugar supply was satisfactory. Egypt is a cane-growing country, and production is sufficient to meet normal consumption. Her people eat vast quantities of sugar, and the Government was well advised to maintain throughout the War their original prohibition upon export of the commodity. This foresight later reaped reward. When sugar elsewhere was scarce and dear, Egypt enjoyed an ample and cheap supply.<sup>1</sup> Butcher's meat also was always plentiful. From the Sudan, a magnificent stock-raising country, cattle poured into the Cairo and Alexandria markets. Broadly speaking, it may be said with truth that, apart from diminishing supplies of wheat and maize, Egypt experienced throughout the War no serious shortage in any commodity of prime necessity, except fuel. Of scarcity of fuel the agriculturist early felt the pinch.<sup>2</sup> To lift summer water from canal to field, pumps must be used, and the fellah was hard put to it to feed the engines. The Government attempted to meet the difficulty by importing directly coal from England; but as shipping became difficult to engage, and as coal prices advanced to fantastic figures, they besought the agricultural community to convert the pumping engines to burn oil. Unfortunately, oil presently became as dear, and almost as scarce, as coal; and it was plain that the fuel consumption of the country ought to be re-

of 1916-17 to £E.2,680,000; of 1917-18 to £E.670,000; and of 1918-19 to £E.4,270,000.

<sup>1</sup> The sugar control has been maintained in Egypt for some years after the conclusion of hostilities, much to the advantage of the local consumer. When in the summer of 1920 sugar in the United States was fetching £145 per ton, and Great Britain had purchased the entire crop of Mauritius f.o.b. at £90 per ton, Egypt was enjoying an ample retail supply at the moderate price of £E.65 per ton.

<sup>2</sup> Coal for domestic use in the winter of 1917-18 passed out of the reach of all but the wealthiest consumer. As much as £E.30 per ton was asked and paid in Egypt, for coal of inferior quality.

stricted. It cannot be said that the Government took any very practical step to carry out this duty. Beyond limiting the artificial illumination of shops and places of public amusement, and appealing feebly to the public to restrict individual consumption, nothing was done until a threatened shortage of kerosene obliged Ministers to act with greater vigour. Kerosene is the fuel of universal use in Egypt for all domestic purposes, and a scarcity of it would be rightly regarded as a public calamity. When, therefore, at the close of 1917, no doubt existed that consumption was overtaking supply, the Government dared not hesitate. A kerosene control was set up, and under martial law rationed issues of the fuel.

The Supplies Control Board, established primarily to safeguard the food-supply, did admirable work in 1918 and the following year, and Egypt has not yet recognized the debt which she owes to the members of that body. But a little rashly the Board gradually extended their authority over almost every necessity of life, and it is a moot point whether Egypt would not have benefited had a second and separate commission been established to control the distribution of commodities other than those relating to food. Human energy and imagination have definite limitations, and the Supplies Board, endeavouring to watch every form of production, could not escape all the consequences which follow disobedience of that universal condition. None the less, it is not possible to read the many orders and instructions issued by the Board without recognizing in them a certain breadth of vision. Vexatious and ineffective local controls were swept away: one tariff became applicable throughout Egypt: waste lands were brought under cultivation: agriculturists bidden to replace poppy and similar crops, bearing no relation to human and animal food, with cereals: stringent measures taken to stop hoarding of stocks:

offices established in Cairo and in Alexandria to distribute cereals entering these towns: and millers and corn factors whose prices exceeded the official tariff brought sharply to book. In short, if the members of the Board were unable to add to the food stocks of Egypt, they were determined to use and distribute to the best advantage what were available.

It is true that the Supplies Board owed some part of its success to the fact that the President was entrusted with power under martial law. On the other hand, the Army without his assistance would have been no more able to obtain food and forage from Egypt than had been the case in the past. Upon the Board fell the delicate task of purchasing and collecting the military requirements. It proceeded by requisition, that harsh and arbitrary law which in other directions already had incensed agricultural Egypt almost beyond the limits of endurance.<sup>1</sup> Once more the fellah was the chief sufferer, the landlord too frequently escaping the obligation. No man could be blamed for seeking to evade the tax: he was often himself short of the type of supplies which the Army required, and unable to replace what was requisitioned except at prices far exceeding the maximum rates prescribed by the Supplies Board. More irritating still to the fellah was a sense of insecurity about payment. The sum received by the seller did not correspond always with the price agreed by the buyer: a pound here and a pound there would disappear during the tortuous passage of the cash from Army Head-quarters to the fellah.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A typical example is a military order, dated 4th March 1918, requiring holders of maize and millet to declare within ten days the quantities in their possession, under pain of confiscation and other punishment.

<sup>2</sup> The Egyptian Government endeavoured to minimize this risk. British Inspectors were instructed to watch closely the procedure of payments, as correspondence shows. Thus a circular letter addressed



Of all forms of control which Europe endured as the result of a state of war, few were guilty of more profound or more costly mistakes than those which dealt with food. The task was not attractive. There were no precedents to frame a policy, no signs to indicate when and where controls should purchase. Available supplies were always short, and the appetite of consumers was insatiable. Harassed controllers, politicians by trade, anxious to insure against errors of judgement, invited men of business to share responsibility, and towards the end of the War the control of every commodity lay in the hands of private citizens who had spent a lifetime in buying or selling it. The Egyptian Government, following an older and less prudent tradition, confined their choice of the members of the new Supplies Board to the ranks of the Civil Service. Thus the Board was composed of men of unquestioned administrative capacity, but without experience of trade or of agriculture. As an afterthought two Egyptians were added as Advisers to the Board. But they were Advisers only in name, handicapped by the same disabilities as their British colleagues. In later years the Government suffered heavily for their persistent belief that the Egyptian Civil Service was competent to conduct vast commercial operations.<sup>1</sup>

On the 3rd November 1917 the Commander-in-to them reads: 'You will realize that a heavy responsibility rests on us (the Government), that proper payment is made to the fellahin for the supplies which, often at great sacrifice to themselves, they have sent to the Army. In order to make certain that they are receiving their money without delay, or reduction, Inspectors must carefully check payments made in their provinces. It is advisable not only to check lists, which already have come in, but also to make continual enquiries, concerning these payments, without waiting for the lists, and to report at once any irregularities you may discover. If you find that people have not been properly paid, an enquiry should be set on foot at once.'

<sup>1</sup> The successors of the Supplies Control Board during the financial year 1920-1 lost £E.9,000,000.

Chief publicly announced his intention in future of requisitioning supplies required for the use of the Expeditionary Force. Military authority in Cairo at once interpreted broadly the terms of the notice. The Inland Water Transport, for example, directed the owners of all sailing craft on the Nile and the main canals to hold their boats exclusively at the disposal of this service. There was good reason to take the step. In the interest of Egyptian agriculture it was imperative to leave the railways free to carry cotton and perishable crops intended for export from the interior to Alexandria and Port Said, while the Army transported their more bulky supplies by water. Unfortunately, the captains and crews of craft were unwilling to work for the Army. It was not a question of terms, for the rates were fair enough, but of conditions imposed by the military. To insist, as the latter did, that a voyage must be made within a fixed number of days, and the boat turned round immediately its cargo was discharged, was extraordinarily distasteful to the Nile sailor, who is accustomed to sail and moor his craft as fancy guides.

Military requisition of labour and of property is an inevitable evil in occupied countries, and Egypt should have accounted herself fortunate that she paid no heavier forfeit for her security. But any hope that public opinion presently would recognize that fact was frustrated by injudicious appeals to the community to contribute towards the funds of the British Red Cross. The invitation would have been harmless had the Egyptians been left free to give or withhold; but that discretion virtually was denied them. Egyptians by nature are not ungenerous: their hospitality, for instance, is notorious. Humble fellahin, preparing their modest meal, cheerfully offer the stranger a share of it, and wealthy men habitually feed hosts of beggars, who have no claim but indigence upon their

charity. But these displays are limited to the provision of food, and uninvited guests must not outstay their welcome, as the common saying among Egyptians, 'I cannot support rain, or a visitor for more than three days', testifies. Nor does the practice include the giving of alms. Few Egyptians bestow money easily upon members of the family or upon local charity. Here and there a princely individual creates a foundation, half religious, half charitable; but the gift is intended to mark rather the piety of the donor than his sympathy with the poor. If then this disinclination to give alms is common to Egyptians, it was improbable that they would contribute to the support of a British society at a moment when they believed themselves to be suffering from grievous injustices arising out of the Protectorate. Nor did they do so voluntarily.

It is recognized now that the appeals of the society were ill timed; but powerful influences carried them superficially to a successful conclusion. His Highness Prince Hussein, Sultan of Egypt, a loyal and admiring friend of Great Britain, warmly supported the invitation addressed to the country. His liberality towards any deserving form of charity was unquestioned, and his imagination easily fired by suffering and distress. Already he had been instrumental in raising a sum of £E.90,000 to commemorate the work of Kitchener in Egypt: now he was prepared to exert his good offices in favour of that noble and selfless organization, the Red Cross. He headed the subscription lists with a handsome donation, and desired his subjects to follow their Sovereign's lead.

The moral forces at the disposal of all Eastern Governments thereupon were let loose. Every village was assessed at a certain sum, and no fellah escaped the net. People of the towns escaped more lightly, the richer residents, equally unwillingly, having to support the burden of the tax. The Egyptian Government

could hardly have been aware of the deep resentment which the appeal caused in the countryside, or at the last hour they would have surely counselled more prudent procedure. But neither they nor other responsible authority in Egypt gauged the strength of feeling upon the point. Privately, people spoke bitterly of this fresh instance of Great Britain's rapacity. Was it not enough, Egyptians asked one another, in order to provide hospital accommodation for the troops, that their children should be dispossessed of school and college buildings : must parents contribute also to the maintenance of the sick and wounded ? <sup>1</sup>

Egypt now had yielded to the Army her labour, her food, and her money. She had no more to give but cotton, and on the 18th June 1918 His Majesty's Government announced by military proclamation their intention of purchasing and distributing the next crop. Politic or not, the step had become imperative in the prosecution of the War. The measures already adopted to prevent Egyptian cotton reaching Germany had not been entirely successful. Switzerland was suspected of infringing her neutrality on the point. The Swiss were divided notoriously in sympathies, and their Government lay between two fires. England had no desire to interfere with legitimate and domestic trade, but she could not afford unconcernedly to watch pro-German traders in Switzerland assist the enemy under cover of their country's professed neutrality. Some guarantee had to be given by the Swiss Government that the blockade would be observed, or Great Britain must forbid the further export of Egyptian cotton to their country. Switzerland met this ultimatum by forming a Commercial Trust (*Société de Surveillance Suisse*), which undertook to guarantee the good faith of local purchasers of raw material : and to that Trust

<sup>1</sup> The total sum received from Egypt and the Sudan in response to all appeals amounted to £E.600,000.

all Egyptian cotton intended for Swiss consumption was consigned. But at this stage of the War Germany was willing to pay inflated prices for the commodity, and every trader could not resist temptation. The Trust, honourably desirous of keeping its engagement, was unable to watch each client, and the black list of Swiss spinning firms daily grew longer. The War Trade Department in Egypt long ago had recognized the imperfections of the control, and in the following winter one of its members urged the Financial Adviser of the Egyptian Government to recommend Great Britain to purchase the entire 1917 crop, as the only practical expedient of cutting off the enemy's supplies. This bold proposal led to the dispatch from London of two members of the Board of Trade to study the suggestion. These gentlemen, becoming convinced that the scheme was practicable, reported to His Majesty's Government in that sense. But valuable time had been lost in deliberation. The cotton crop of 1917 was harvested and sold before a decision could be taken, and no action was possible until the following summer.

Great Britain in the spring of 1918 was mortgaging her resources so fast that one more financial burden seemed of small moment. A few millions of money would make little difference to the load of debt which she was carrying already, and ample supplies of Egyptian cotton were now of vital importance to Great Britain. Munition and clothing factories, daily expanding their output, required increasing quantities of raw material, and every pound of cotton which Egypt could produce was wanted urgently. Apart, therefore, from an imperative necessity to deprive Germany of the supply of this valuable commodity, His Majesty's Government in their own interests were forced to control and distribute the entire production of cotton. The proposal to purchase

the whole crop came as no surprise to Egypt, nor, unless British opinion in that country had misread the signs, was there reason to apprehend that the cultivator would protest. In point of fact he raised no objection, well satisfied to sell at the round figure of 42 dollars a kantar. The price was a slight advance upon the ruling rates, and growers were assured of a certain and an immediate sale. The Council of Ministers for a while looked coldly upon the scheme. Under the terms of the agreement Egypt guaranteed the producer's interests, and Ministers were reluctant, at the bidding of England, to saddle their country with financial responsibilities, however indirect. But the responsibility was no more than nominal, since the Protecting Power stood behind them.<sup>1</sup> Conveniently, also, they forgot the salient consideration that Great Britain alone could provide the shipping required to transport the cotton overseas, and that without her aid the crop would rot in the ground or remain unsold. More justly, perhaps, the hesitation of the Ministers may be ascribed to a very different reason. Large landowners themselves, they sought to obtain the uttermost farthing from the buyer. It is known, for example, that they opened negotiations by declaring that 60 dollars a kantar was the lowest offer which would purchase Egyptian co-operation. Their attitude on this point was perfectly legitimate. Representing the growers, the Council were entitled to place whatever value they thought fit upon the cotton, and any criticism in a contrary sense is illogical and ungenerous. Price became wholly a matter of bargaining, and the figure finally offered and accepted was in the nature of a compromise. At all events, no public complaint was made of it until the 1919 crop was sold

<sup>1</sup> In point of fact, neither country did more than pledge her credit. The purchase of the crop was conducted upon normal lines through the banking houses of Cairo and London.

at prices undreamt of by Egyptian agriculturists.<sup>1</sup> Then Egypt began to count up imaginary losses of the preceding year, and politicians spoke of Great Britain's control as impudent robbery, and indicative of the suffering of their country under a Protectorate. But Egyptians did not take into account the changed conditions of the world. In the winter of 1919-20 a period of inflated business had set in, and European factories were prepared to pay any price for raw material. Egypt, seller of cotton, shared in that brief era of prosperity.

It is unnecessary to enumerate the safeguards provided under the control for the protection of the respective interests of purchaser and producer. It is sufficient to state that the Cotton Commission formed on the 17th June 1918 bought and resold all cotton arriving at Egyptian ports.<sup>2</sup> Of the many controls set up in Egypt during the War, none operated so smoothly as that of cotton. Many conditions favoured this result. Cultivators had no wish to hold up their produce: commercial agencies handling the business side were satisfied with their profits: and buying was brisk. Yet part of the success was directly attributable to the fact that each member of the Commission was a recognized authority, either in the financial or in the cotton world. The Commission enjoyed almost complete independence. The Army did not meddle: His Majesty's Government stood aloof: and Egypt was placated by preserving the right to nominate the Chairman of the Control. Thus it came about that the Commission was unhampered with the dead weight

<sup>1</sup> In the early winter of 1919-20 Egyptian cotton touched the remarkable price of 200 dollars a kantar. The annual crop, it may be said, produces usually about 6,000,000 kantars.

<sup>2</sup> It was not the first control in Egypt in connexion with cotton. On the 12th August 1917 a Cotton Seed Board had been established to purchase, store, and ship the quantities of seed required by Great Britain.

of inexperience. None the less, its members welcomed expert assistance, and gladly made use of the Advisory Board, whereon cultivators, export agencies, and bankers were represented. From the outset the Commission prudently restricted itself to control, leaving the purchase and manipulation of the crop to a number of selected cotton firms. Scheduled prices of the various grades were fixed, and arbitration committees appointed to hear complaints from sellers who were dissatisfied with the original classification of their produce. Therein lay, perhaps, the weakest point of the scheme. Not every member of the arbitration committee was competent to distinguish between the different and puzzling types of Egyptian cotton. At first, to the great injury of spinners, who confidently bought the raw material in the belief that it was of the grade described, the committees were disposed to be over indulgent towards growers. Later, galled by rebuke, they passed to the other extreme, when the village broker and the fellah jointly paid a heavy penalty. Exporting firms and commission houses in London, purchasing largely, made vast profits from the Control, and the Cotton Commission was far from content at this unexpected development. But its protest on the point was overruled. The spinner in the summer of 1919 cared very little what price he paid for raw cotton of an assured high grade.

In any review of the work of this Commission two points deserve special comment. Firstly, the reluctance of the members to alter or to interfere with established practice. There were thus no vexatious proclamations or perplexing orders issued by the Control to read and register. In less than half a dozen notices, all brief and all lucid, the Commission explained the procedure which would be pursued. That procedure remained unchanged throughout. Secondly, the harmonious relations which prevailed between the



Commission and the public. The moral to be drawn is as clear as it is instructive. Where a state of war exists, that country succeeds best which takes into counsel the acknowledged leaders of commerce. Egypt learnt the lesson later than other nations.

## XVI

### REBELLION

IN the preceding chapter an endeavour has been made to trace the causes which during the closing months of war stirred fellahin Egypt into savage hatred of British authority. The remarkable increase of prosperity enjoyed by Egypt in common with all agricultural countries had not mitigated that bitterness of feeling, nor did the first days of peace produce a kindlier atmosphere. Military requisition still continued: military rule stiffened, rather than relaxed. The Expeditionary Force had overrun Syria, and, until the Peace Congress had determined the disposal of that province, the Army could not proceed with the demobilization either of British or Egyptian units. The extended line of communication from the outposts in Cilicia to the base on the Suez Canal required the presence of large forces in the field, and for a moment no reduction in strength of fighting or of auxiliary corps safely could be made. To the Egyptian suffering from a vicious system of requisition the situation was intolerable. His ostensible connexion with the War had ceased, yet he was still required to bear onerous and distasteful burdens. Only from one did he procure immediate relief: the Army wanted no more camels. The Expeditionary Force even was releasing those in the field; for the prodigious cost of the Camel Transport Corps required the disbandment of the unit at the earliest possible moment. Not unmindful of the grievances of fellahin, General Head-quarters offered to them the chance of purchasing at the flat rate of £20 a head

camels no longer needed. The price was very reasonable, since the cultivators of Syria and Palestine gladly would have paid more, to the advantage of the British Exchequer. But the fellah took another point of view. Prejudiced and obstinate, he thought £20 ridiculously high, and not even the fact that from no source elsewhere could he buy camels as cheaply altered that belief. Nothing would have contented him now, but to buy young and healthy male camels at rates below the market's ruling prices, and less than he himself had been paid when the Army had taken his beasts. In fairness to the British taxpayer, military authority could not meet that wish.

While educated Egyptians gloomily watched in 1917 and the succeeding year the unceasing exploitation of the resources of their country by the British Military Forces, they made no protest against that practice, nor broke silence to testify sympathy with the actual sufferers. Their whole attention was occupied with the political grievance of Egypt. Of what use, asked they one of another, that President Wilson should speak of self-determination, when England denied Egypt the chance to exercise the privilege. If appearances were any guide, Great Britain had no intention of relinquishing her overlordship. The habit,<sup>1</sup> temporarily arrested through various causes during the first part of the War, of substituting, whenever conditions admitted, Englishmen for Egyptians in

<sup>1</sup> 'Lord Cromer in his earlier days worked with a British staff of 300-400. His successors in recent years have had from 1,600 to 1,700. Making all allowance for the growth of population, this is an altogether unnecessary increase; it means that a great deal of work, which could and ought to be done by Egyptians, has been put into British hands. The number of Egyptians employed in higher posts actually decreased from 27·7 per cent. in 1905 to 23 per cent. in 1920.' 'The Egyptian Problem,' by T. A. Spender—a member of Lord Milner's Mission to Egypt in 1920 (published in the April number, 1922, of the *Quarterly Review*).

the higher posts of the Administration, had returned,<sup>1</sup> and the revival was the more marked by the rigid exclusion of the latter from appointment in the many new departments created by the Government to deal with the civil problems of the War. Entire Ministries became almost denationalized, and rumour credited Egyptian officials with the surrender of all authority to their British colleagues. There was some truth, no doubt, in the criticism, but circumstances had made the process almost inevitable. During the final years of the War, the Government were wholly engrossed in endeavouring to satisfy the demands of military authority, and legitimately enough the burden fell upon the shoulders of Englishmen in the service of Egypt. Thus, British officials were forced at periods to issue orders upon matters hardly within their province; less with desire to usurp power than to hasten business.

As yet Egypt had found no leader to voice her discontent, and was looking to Cairo to supply that deficiency. But the moment had not yet come, for men of understanding believed in their hearts that the existing state of affairs was impermanent. Neither admirers nor supporters of England in Egypt, they admitted that her presence in the country had saved them from a new and less gentle military occupation; and, themselves untouched by the inconveniences of war, they viewed the practice of military requisition more lightly than the victims of it. So stedfastly did

<sup>1</sup> Port Said is not an unfair illustration. All the better-paid posts, except that of the Governor and his Deputy, were filled by Englishmen. The Commandants of the Police and of the Coastguard Administrations, the Directors of the Ports and Lights Department and their seconds in command, were all British. Of the same nationality also were the representative of Public Health, the Medical Officer in charge of the Civil Hospital, the Director of Customs, and of the Municipality. Even in the Quarantine Service Egyptians were ousted by Europeans.

these Egyptians, the natural leaders of the nation, cling to this belief that they applied it to other misfortunes suffered by their country from her connexion with the War. In their minds the conviction grew that the Protectorate was no more than a temporary measure, destined with martial law to disappear on conclusion of hostilities. Egyptians who played with this conceit were deceiving themselves: there had been nothing to suggest that Great Britain would loosen her grip upon Egypt, or would withdraw the Protectorate. It was only necessary indeed to read carefully the document announcing the establishment of it, to recognize the intention of British permanency in Egypt. But Egyptian memory is so short, and Egyptian imagination so easily persuaded, that the leaders of public opinion continued to indulge their dream until the summer of 1918, when illusion was rudely dispelled. Great Britain exercised at Abu Qir, a village distant a few miles from Alexandria, sovereign rights over Egyptian soil.

For nearly two years the Royal Air Force had been in occupation of the area. The land was of little value, either for agricultural or for building purposes, and there is no reason to suppose that the owners, liberally compensated for their temporary dispossession, objected to the presence of the visitors. But in March 1917 the Army Council, looking ahead, approved of the construction of a permanent air station on the site, and it became necessary to negotiate with the owners for the sale outright of the land. The Air Commander could not wait for the completion of the business, and began work at once on the area. Permanent buildings were erected, roads laid out, and the property improved in other ways. The customary result of land development followed. The value of all property in the vicinity appreciated, and owners at Abu Qir asked absurdly inflated prices or refused to sell. Months

passed in fruitless haggling, until, losing patience, the Army Council desired the Commander-in-Chief in Egypt to requisition the land in accordance with military custom. Egypt was consumed with wrath when the proclamation was published.<sup>1</sup> She asked angrily how a council sitting in London could declare their right to dispossess Egyptians forcibly and permanently from Egyptian soil. To that question it must be confessed that there was only one reply: the interests of England and of Egypt under a Protectorate were indivisible. Unfortunately, that claim was precisely what Egypt now obstinately refused to admit. The wound smarted the more from the fact that the committee appointed under the proclamation to value the land at Abu Qir included no Egyptians among its members. To have chosen one would not have soothed national sentiment; but the act would have been a graceful courtesy. But throughout the War little pains were taken by the Army either to cultivate friendly relations with prominent Egyptians or to interest them in the progress of the campaign. A few Notables in the winter of 1914-15 had been invited privately to view the defence of the Suez Canal, and during the early summer of 1916 the Commander-in-Chief asked a number of members of the Legislative Assembly to lunch at Ismailia. But neither he nor his successor pursued the politeness, and Egyptians grew shy of intruding upon military authority.

Among influential persons residing in the capital was Saad Pasha Zaghlul, ex-Minister of State, and Vice-President of the Legislative Assembly. Of fellahin parentage, Saad owed early advancement neither to family influence nor to wealth. His youth was spent at El Azhar, the celebrated Islamic University of Cairo, where his ready tongue and his application to study attracted attention. Later he joined the

<sup>1</sup> Dated 19th August 1918.

native Bar, and the Ministry of Justice presently raised him to the Bench. Lord Cromer became interested in the career of this rising man, and Egyptians spoke of Saad with admiration. The British Agent at that moment was seeking a suitable Egyptian to become the first Minister of Education in Egypt, and his choice fell upon Saad Zaghlul. In him Lord Cromer believed that he had found an instrument who would be accepted by Egyptians, and yet pliant enough to submit to British advice. He was mistaken in both assumptions. The Arabic Press attacked Saad as fiercely as it did his British adviser, and the Minister refused to be the puppet of the latter. If Saad was often indiscreet, he did not lack courage. He returned blow for blow, careless whether it was foul or fair, and his critics, both British and Egyptians, quickly found it best to leave him alone. Although vain in some respects and pretentious in others, he commanded respect from his countrymen. He made enemies, but also a host of friends. He stood up boldly to the Khedive, and did not trouble to conceal his hatred of England. As Saad grew older, his defects became more pronounced, until even his fellow Ministers complained of their colleague's obstinate self-sufficiency. The Khedive, always suspicious of display of independence upon the part of any Egyptian, became his personal enemy. Lord Kitchener at length was compelled to intervene, and Saad Pasha to resign.

But the Minister lost little from that act of penance. Elected as Vice-President of the new Legislative Assembly, and establishing himself in that chamber as a leader of the Opposition, he criticized the Government unmercifully. In eloquence and in knowledge of administration no Minister was his superior, and the members of the Assembly implicitly followed his opinion. Saad Pasha Zaghlul in 1912 was not the

irresponsible demagogue he has since become. No Egyptian knew better the weakness of his country, or recognized more clearly her inability to stand alone, and no one but he on the declaration of the Protectorate in December 1914 had the courage to urge the Cabinet to continue in office. His voice and influence then were all for moderation and for patience. During the years of war his reputation grew, and when he spoke all people listened. Egyptians have little use for politicians who are tongue-tied. The pithy address, however much to the point, delivered by a speaker who knows his subject, does not move them. They prefer the discourse of men who clothe their thoughts in felicitous language, whatever the inspiration. Saad Pasha has the gift of words, and vast audiences hang for hours upon the phrases which drop from his lips. Translated, his speeches sound coldly to English ears; mostly a jumble of unpractical and isolated thoughts, with no common idea connecting them. But that defect does not spoil the pleasure of his hearers. They come not to learn but to enjoy sonorous language.

Throughout the year 1918 Saad Pasha was endeavouring to unite Egyptians into a single political party, wherein sectarian and local rivalry would be buried, and when the Armistice was declared he had solid ground for belief that an undivided nation would support his demand for autonomy. The stars in their courses had fought for him, since there was no section of the population without one bitter memory of the War. Month by month Egyptians had been stripped of their illusions and despoiled of their property. Their labour, crops, and animals had been seized, and their territorial sovereignty usurped. Arabia, barbarous and poverty-stricken, was thought worthy by Great Britain to enjoy independence, while Egypt, civilized and prosperous, remained in political subjection.



Animated by these reflections, on the morrow of the Armistice a deputation of Egyptians headed by Saad waited upon the High Commissioner, requesting permission to proceed to London to lay before the British Cabinet the claim of their country to autonomy. Taking as their cue the memorable pronouncement of President Wilson, the deputation urged that Egypt's substantial contribution in men and supplies to the British Military Forces had earned, in turn, a generous reconsideration of her political condition. The speakers had no authority to represent their fellow countrymen; but their social standing and reputation forbade the High Commissioner to make use of that argument. Nor did he attempt to do so. He was so far impressed on the contrary with their reasonable attitude and language that he counselled His Majesty's Government to receive the deputation. The advice was rejected, and the High Commissioner was bidden to inform the deputation that 'no useful purpose would be served by their coming'. The decision was a painful blunder, which cost England dearly.

General Sir R. Wingate had succeeded Sir Henry MacMahon as High Commissioner in the last weeks of 1916. The stay of the latter had been too brief to permit him to leave any mark upon Egypt,<sup>1</sup> and his reputation rests chiefly upon the successful conduct of negotiations with the Sherif of Mecca, whereby that Prince joined the Allies. His recall was totally unexpected by the Egyptian public, and the news that Sir R. Wingate would replace him hardly less so. But if others had forgotten the Governor-General of the Sudan His Majesty's Government had kept him in mind. Wingate's experience of North-Eastern Africa was almost unique: either in Egypt or in the Sudan he had spent the whole of his active life. He possessed a multitude of friends in both countries. In Egypt he

<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry MacMahon arrived in Egypt in January 1915.

was a favourite with His Highness the Sultan, and upon intimate terms with individual Ministers. In addition to these personal qualifications he was a practised administrator. Lieutenant and successor of Kitchener, he had built, upon foundations solidly laid, a stable government in the Sudan, and in his rule over that vast dependency he had displayed the qualities which Englishmen have come to expect from the best type of the soldier administrator. His Majesty's Government may well have been satisfied with their selection of Wingate as High Commissioner of Egypt.

But the problems which Sir R. Wingate was called upon to meet in Egypt were different from those of the Sudan. Egyptian administration had become a highly complex business. A Protectorate existed side by side with Capitulations; British Advisers accepted part of the responsibility of the government of the country, Egyptian Ministers the balance; and over all elements hung, like a heavy cloud, the authority of martial law. As the summer of 1917 passed into autumn, difficulties were accentuated. The Sultan Hussein Kamil, a true and devoted friend of Englishmen, died, and was succeeded on the throne by his brother Fuad. The Commander-in-Chief departed into Palestine, and military considerations in Egypt over-mastered civil. The Advisers extended their authority, British officials, thinned in numbers by the calls of the Army and exhausted by continuous strain, lost part of their energy. Hampered by these disabilities, the new High Commissioner had an unenviable task.

There was also a further disadvantage from which the new High Commissioner suffered. The old and familiar intercourse between Notables and the Representative of England in Egypt was less pronounced than had been the case in the past. To the Consul-Generals of the past—Cromer, Gorst, and Kitchener,

names familiar in every Egyptian household—had succeeded MacMahon, first High Commissioner, a total stranger to the country. Egyptians, always slow to form new friendships, went less to the Agency, and MacMahon's successor paid the penalty. Conditions too, in 1917, were unfavourable to frank interchange of views between Englishmen and Egyptians. The harsh and often incomprehensible policy of the local censorship<sup>1</sup> had reduced the national Press to impotence, and the public were no less chary of expressing their thoughts in words. An innocent but injudicious remark might cause the utterer to be suspected of disloyalty, and even the High Commissioner could not altogether dispel the suspicion with which Egyptians now regarded every Englishman in authority.

But he had still open numerous sources of information, and from them he was well aware that Egyptian feeling was highly incensed at the refusal of Great Britain to receive the representatives of Egypt. Resentment was kindling into hatred, and passive submission into open defiance. Wingate, noting the change of spirit, urged His Majesty's Government to reconsider their decision. His appeal was unsuccessful. England, swollen with pride over the downfall of Germany, was in no mood to listen to warning of impending troubles in Egypt.

The obstinacy of the Government on the point is difficult to understand. However inconvenient in the hour of victory to investigate the alleged grievances of Egypt, or however distasteful to yield to the demand of an insignificant dependency, it would have been a gracious and prudent act of courtesy to permit

<sup>1</sup> Its methods were the subject of severe and not always unjust criticism. *The Times* defined the Egyptian censorship as 'the most incompetent, the most inept, and the most savagely ruthless in any country under British control, not excepting Mesopotamia'.

the deputation to visit London. The Cabinet could hardly have anticipated danger to their plans at Versailles from the presence of a few obscure and discontented Egyptians in Europe. France and Italy were too occupied with their respective ambitions to care whether Egypt approved or disapproved of the Protectorate, and the United States too conscious of England's share in the War to interfere with her domestic policy in Northern Africa. If, then, Great Britain desired the formal concurrence of the Allies in the Protectorate over Egypt, she would have surely obtained her wish, whatever protests Saad Zaghlul and his fellows may have raised.

Egypt, refusing to accept the decision of His Majesty's Government as final, stiffened her back. In every town and village members and agents of the deputation came and went, counselling the people to organize themselves, so that Egypt might be free. The campaign was skilfully conducted. Private and public rivalries were reconciled, Mohammedan fraternized with Copt, and Saad Pasha became the acknowledged leader of the nation. Quickened by that certainty, he now dropped all talk of autonomy, and declared for complete independence. Meanwhile His Majesty's Government, puzzled by conflicting reports, summoned home the High Commissioner to explain the situation. He reached Paris at an inopportune moment. No Minister had sufficient leisure to listen to him. Rarely has a distinguished administrator received more chilling welcome. As a final mortification he was forbidden to return to Cairo, where his tact and judgement might yet have saved the situation. But it was not to be. First Maxwell, then Wingate, the two living Englishmen most intimate with Egyptian prejudice and feeling, were withdrawn and replaced by strangers to the country.

But Sir R. Wingate had hardly left Egypt before the

Residency was forced into action. Egypt was simmering openly with discontent, and military authority peremptorily required Saad Zaghlul to abstain from further political activity. The Egyptian took no notice of the warning. Declaring that his objection to the Protectorate was no crime either against military or against civil law, he continued his campaign with redoubled vigour. It is doubtful whether vague inhibitions of this nature are ever very effective. Too frequently they succeed only in driving the recipient to believe that authority is afraid to proceed beyond warnings. If repressive measures must be employed, there is but one golden rule, in Egypt as elsewhere, which governs their use—strike hard, and strike quickly. That maxim was forgotten at this moment. Saad contemptuously waived aside the threat which authority had delivered too late.

At this stage, both the Egyptian Government and the British Army should have been on their guard. Instead, the first deliberately refused to believe that serious trouble was threatening, and took no step to cope with an outbreak. The police were neither concentrated nor reinforced at important points. British Inspectors were permitted to proceed upon leave of absence, and Europeans, resident in isolated districts, were afforded no special protection. Nor can the military command in Cairo escape blame altogether for subsequent disorder. No doubt, now that war was over, in theory the maintenance of public order was a domestic responsibility of the Government and not of the Army, and the latter was entitled to expect timely warning that its assistance in preserving peace might be required later. On the other hand, the foreign community, in accordance with tradition, looked, in the final resort, for safety of their lives and property to British troops, and not to Egyptian police. The Command also had at their

side in Cairo a costly and elaborate branch of the Intelligence Service, which ought to have recognized in advance the gravity of the situation. But for one reason or another, that Service was caught asleep, and the forces had no presentiment of danger, or even suspicion that feeling in the country was highly excited. Thus, when the moment of action arrived, the troops were handled without sense of the importance of their employment.

On the 8th March 1919, within a few days of administering their warning, military authority arrested Saad Pasha Zaghlul, with three of his principal lieutenants, and embarked them for Malta:<sup>1</sup> and on the following morning demonstrations of discontent were made everywhere in Cairo. The first scenes gave no indications that more serious trouble was brewing, and the Egyptian police appeared to have the situation well in hand. But that optimistic belief was abandoned a few hours later, and replaced by a truer appreciation of the facts. Numbers of roughs and vagrants, reinforced by students, paraded up and down the city, shouting for independence and the return of the exiled Pashas, and at every street corner stood an Effendi, preaching Nationalist doctrines to any Egyptians who would stop to listen. It was pretty clear to the observant public that demonstration presently would develop into rioting. That anticipation was soon fulfilled. The police and the processions came into conflict, when shots were exchanged and casualties suffered on both sides. The tumult and the excitement spread rapidly into every quarter of the town. Ugly stories were whispered of

<sup>1</sup> Mohammed Pasha Mahmud, Ismail Pasha Sidki, and Hamid Pasha Basel accompanied Saad. All three were distinguished and wealthy Egyptians. The first had been educated at Balliol, Oxford, and obtained a second class in the History Schools. The second had been Minister of Agriculture, and the third was a leading Bedouin Notable.

pillage in the bazaars, and of the murder of inoffensive tradesmen. Unfortunate Syrians and Armenians, terrified by these rumours, deserted their shops and homes, and fled into the desert for safety. The Civil Administration met the trouble half-heartedly and irresolutely. One day an advertised demonstration would be forbidden to march through the streets; a few hours later the prohibition would be withdrawn and police officers ordered to march at the head of the procession. There was small doubt now that the arrest of Saad Zaghlul and his lieutenants had produced precisely the opposite effect anticipated by the authors of the act. Far from checking the growth of trouble, it had excited an outburst so fierce, that the Egyptian Government was constrained to confess their inability to control it, and virtually forced to surrender their responsibility to military authority.

The help of the latter was invited none too soon. Disorder, confined at first to Cairo, was spreading fast up and down the valley of the Nile. Robbery and violence were reported from everywhere, and the savage and unprovoked slaughter of unarmed Englishmen at Deirut was a crowning outrage. The fellahin set no limit to their barbarity. Suffocating with pent-up passion, they had lost temporarily all sense of reason, and anarchy reigned in the land. Representatives of the Central Government found none to obey their orders; self-elected bodies, calling themselves Committees of Public Safety, usurped the functions of authority in the towns, and Soviets of Sheikhs ruled in the villages. Everywhere there was a mad desire to destroy. The banks of irrigation canals were cut, the permanent way of the State Railways was torn up, the stations and signal boxes were burnt, and the dwelling-places of Europeans razed to the ground.

If His Majesty's Government were surprised to discover that their refusal to receive Saad Zaghlul was

followed by the outbreak of disorder, or that their firm attitude on the subject of the Protectorate had only stiffened the resistance of Egyptians towards British authority, they gave no sign of the fact, or of intention to pursue a more conciliatory policy. The rioting and the unrest reported from Cairo and other centres were to be repressed at once, and not until calm was restored would an investigation into the origin of the confusion be begun. In that decision Ministers were guided by tradition. When trouble breaks out in a distant dependency, Great Britain has one invariable policy. She dispatches to the scene a public servant of unimpeachable record, accords him complete authority, and awaits his report upon the cause of the trouble. The Cabinet followed that practice now.

There was no difficulty in finding the man. By accident, General Allenby was in Paris when the situation in Egypt was at the worst, and the choice of the Cabinet fell upon him. The Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force had been brought to France in connexion with another problem. The subject of Syria had become unexpectedly prominent in the Peace discussion, and the Congress at Versailles was trying, sincerely but vainly, to reconcile conflicting claims to the overlordship of that country. So many treaties and conventions, which professed to decide the point in dispute, had been signed in the course of the War, that their correlation in peace was a perplexing business, and in despair the British Government had summoned to their assistance the one Englishman who at that moment was qualified to advise. There was no doubt of General Allenby's credentials. His troops were garrisoning Syria, and in practice he was administering the government of the province. His common sense had kept local dissension quiet; but friction existed, and would increase until



the pretensions of the rival claimants were decided. The situation had its awkwardness, also, for him. Already French administrators murmured that the British officers were unduly disposed to favour Feisul, and the Arabs complained that the French were robbing them of the spoils of victory. If, then, it lay upon Great Britain to propose at Versailles a new arrangement, no Englishman was better fitted than General Allenby to suggest its form. But he was given little time to explain his views upon Syria. He had barely reached Paris, when he was on his way back to Egypt as Special High Commissioner, with absolute authority, civil and military, save that he might not alter the terms of the Protectorate.<sup>1</sup>

To repress disorder is more the business of an Imperial policeman than of a distinguished captain of war, and, in point of fact, armed rebellion was crushed before the Special High Commissioner had got back to Egypt. But his responsibilities were little lightened by that relief; other and graver difficulties encompassed him. He had first to restore confidence to an Administration shattered by the defection of its leaders, and weakened by insubordination among its rank and file; and next, to efface the universal bitterness felt by Egyptians towards Great Britain. There

<sup>1</sup> The terms of the notice announcing the appointment are explicit on that point:

‘It is announced that in view of the grave situation in Egypt and the absence of His Majesty’s High Commissioner from that country, the King has been graciously pleased to appoint General Sir Edmund Henry Allenby, G.C.B., to be His Majesty’s Special High Commissioner for Egypt and the Sudan. He is directed to exercise supreme authority in all matters, Military and Civil, to take all such measures as he considers expedient to restore law and order in those countries, and to order and administrate in all matters as required by the necessity of maintaining the King’s Protectorate over Egypt on a secure and equitable basis.’ (Published in the Official Journal, Egyptian Government, on the 25th March 1919.)

was no Ministry in office, and the Civil Service wavering between duty and inclination. A very few, Egyptians still struggled to spare the country the evil of administrative anarchy; the majority, carried away by the prevailing emotion, raised no finger to delay the catastrophe. He was handicapped as heavily in his second responsibility. There was in truth but one immediate cure for the discontent, and it—the withdrawal of the Protectorate—he was expressly forbidden to employ. If the fable is true that the gods of Higher Olympus find pleasure in the spectacle of a brave man struggling with adversity, then Allenby, battling single-handed with difficulties in Cairo, must have enrolled their interest. Nothing during the first days of his appointment relieved the gloom. When the Civil Service was at work there was no Ministry; when a Ministry was in office, there was no Civil Service. Of the senior British officials, the High Commissioner was seeking to replace some by fresh men; others were overtaxed by strain and fatigue. No sooner was one Nationalist manœuvre detected and defeated than a second was launched. Through these tumultuous hours General Allenby passed unscathed and unmoved. None the less, there were some men who questioned the wisdom, at so critical a point in the relations of Great Britain with Egypt, of appointing a soldier to the post of High Commissioner. In theory, the critics had reason. A life apprenticeship to war can seldom be a safe guide to the science of government, and if experience of administration and knowledge of local conditions were necessary qualifications in a High Commissioner of Egypt, it may be conceded that Allenby was imperfectly equipped for his new position. From his brief control of occupied enemy territory in Palestine, he could hardly claim the first attribute, nor could he have acquired the second from a few short visits to

snatched during periods of inaction upon the front. But England rarely errs in selecting men at moments of crisis. An uncanny judgement on such occasions guides her choice, and four years of war had not destroyed the instinct. Nor had officers serving in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force any doubt upon the point. They well knew their commander's inflexible sense of duty, and his powers of intuition. As High Commissioner, General Allenby had need of the first. Before he could address himself to weightier matters, he must first punish the perpetrators of outrage and violence, and the part of an avenger is rarely pleasing to play.

It was high time that one supreme authority controlled affairs in Egypt. Matters were drifting from bad to worse, and the stern reminder that the King's Protectorate would be maintained had added stimulus to national indignation. No Englishman now pretended that the uprising was inspired by professional agitators, or that the men who marched in processions were all paid for the service. Evidence was accumulating daily, indicating that the nation was heart and soul in the movement. In Cairo, the Bar and Medicine openly flouted authority, and every respectable citizen applauded the lawyers and doctors for their action. In the country, influential landlords, who hitherto had remained spectators, proffered their allegiance to the new Nationalist party. The policy of the party altered. In place of opposing authority with violence, leaders exhorted educated men to practise passive resistance. It was a shrewd stroke of generalship to discard violence, since there was no hope of further assistance from the fellahin. The desire to revenge the injuries which this class had suffered during the preceding years had been sated, and fellahin were beginning to count up the consequences of their folly. But educated men as yet

had no reckoning to pay, and upon their co-operation the party henceforth placed trust. Insensibly, the movement assumed more the form of conspiracy than of revolution. Concealing their identity, politicians worked through a host of agents, securing themselves in this manner from arrest and their objectives from premature disclosure. The party laid their plans craftily and well. Since the Army attached so great importance to security of communications, the leaders decided first to paralyse transport; next they would put an end to Civil Administration: and finally they would force every Egyptian to refuse ministerial office. The objectives were too ambitious. The Nationalists possessed neither the skill nor the organization to bring any one of their hopes to a triumphant conclusion.

But conditions favoured the opening stages of the new campaign. Members of the Egyptian Bar already had announced that they would absent themselves from all Courts of Justice until Great Britain withdrew her pretensions. Authority took up the challenge, declaring in turn that suitors no longer need be legally represented, and that interested parties were at liberty to appoint whom they would to represent them before the Tribunals. The counterstroke was effective in one direction, damaging in another. Justice continued nominally to pursue her way, but the Bar became the fiercest partisan of Nationalism, and the latter gained the services of a body of fluent and practised speakers. From the students, who at the first note of defiance had ceased to attend school, came other useful lieutenants. These lads, setting parental authority at naught, travelled to the most distant corners of Egypt, exhorting Notables and officials to stand firm in the hour of trial. There is a touch of comedy in the modern relation of an Egyptian boy and his elders. Elsewhere his passion for rhetoric would be stamped out at a very tender

age; in Egypt it is permitted to flourish unchecked. Fathers have ceased to exercise constraint over their sons, and head masters of schools may not administer exemplary punishment to their pupils. Little illustrates more aptly the irresolution of the Egyptian Government than the attitude adopted by the Ministry of Education in face of the universal refusal of boys and girls to return to school. In place of threatening dire punishment for disobedience, the Ministry entreated them to resume their studies. The students paid no attention to the invitation, and the schools remained closed until military authority intervened. Then, and then only, did the boys and girls return.

Save in the matter of railways, Egypt in 1919 was ill-provided with facilities of communication. The internal-combustion engine, which had revolutionized transport in other countries, was little known outside Cairo and Alexandria. Elsewhere no metal roads exist which heavy mechanical transport can use. Nor was full advantage taken of the Nile. On that magnificent natural artery of communication, only slow sailing craft, unpunctual and unreliable, competed with the railways: the State having discouraged consistently the development of transport, either by road or by water, lest the revenue derived from the national railways might be imperilled. The Nationalist party, therefore, had but to persuade railway employees to cease work, and Egypt temporarily would be deprived of her communications. The difficulty was to convince the men of the necessity of sacrifice. Willing enough to join in abuse of the Protectorate, and devoid of affection or loyalty towards the Egyptian Government, they yet hesitated to jeopardize their own livelihood merely to further a political design framed in no interest of their own. It is probable that the railway personnel would have refused to take

a definite step, had not a persistent rumour been spread that Englishmen were about to replace Egyptians throughout the system.

In the units of the Expeditionary Force, awaiting demobilization, were soldiers who in civilian life worked as railwaymen; and that they might regain the practice of their calling, the Egyptian Government had thrown open to them the shops and offices of the State Railways. It was a kindly intention, but the act cost the giver nothing, since the pay and maintenance of the soldiers were supported by Army funds. No Englishman displaced an Egyptian: nor until the moment suited did the latter resent the intrusion of the former. But the Nationalist party had found the argument which they sought. Up and down the line word was passed that British soldiers had come to take the place of Egyptians on the railways. The General Manager too late learnt the existence of the rumour, and before he could inform his men of the true facts, drivers, signalmen, guards and others had ceased to work. The exodus of personnel was complete; traffic over the system was entirely stopped; and for a few brief hours the leaders of the party claimed that they had won a victory.

But the triumph was far from complete, and Nationalists had not taken British energy into account. Behind a determined General Manager stood an equally obstinate community, who resented this unprovoked attack upon their convenience. Largely from the assistance afforded by private citizens, the Administration succeeded speedily in re-establishing train service between the capital and the suburbs, and with Alexandria. But the State Telegraph and Postal employees, who had followed the example of the railwaymen, could not be so easily replaced, and Cairo was unable to communicate with distant pro-

vinces. The Government and the Army suffered grave inconvenience from the disruption of services, but the Nationalist party also were hard hit. In endeavouring to paralyse communication, the leaders forgot that if the Government could issue no instructions to their representatives outside Cairo, neither could they. Thus, in many centres of provincial unrest, local branches, unable to maintain touch with Cairo, were at a loss how to act.

But the party, blind to the confusion existing in their ranks, passed on hopefully to their second objective. The general idea was simple enough. On a given date the employees of the Egyptian Government would absent themselves from office, and thus arrest the administration of the country. Many honestly believed that abstention would be limited to a matter of two or, at the most, three days, and were dismayed to discover that they were not to return until England in alarm threw up the sponge. Apart from the improbability of that contingency, the scheme was doomed to fail for other reasons. There were no funds to give strike pay, and without some financial assistance many of the clerks with their families would starve. Efforts to collect contributions from wealthy sympathizers with the Nationalist cause were not very successful, for Egyptians give voluntarily to no man, whatever his claims. Next, the British elements of the Civil Service, doubling their tasks, kept the administrative engine running at a reduced rate of speed. And lastly, Egyptian employees serving in the provinces only half-heartedly joined in the campaign.

Left to his own devices, the Effendi would have registered his protest and slunk back to office in the course of a few hours. But the Nationalist party had foreseen that possibility, and had craftily posted pickets of students at the door of each ministry.

Rather than face these fierce sentinels, the submissive clerk stayed at home. He is, in fact, usually a spiritless creature, timid of authority, and jealous of his fellow workers. He had no hope that independence would change his fortune; rather he knew that promotion in future would go less by merit than by interest. Yet if any Egyptian had cause to feel bitterness against the State it was the humble government employee. He was very near privation. His salary was constant,<sup>1</sup> while the cost of living was always rising.<sup>2</sup> Authority complacently ignored the discrepancy. No explanation has been offered which satisfactorily excuses the neglect of the Government to apply a remedy, and their inaction undoubtedly contributed indirectly to the discontent prevailing in the towns. A permanent and general increase of salaries in 1918 would have been a heavy drain on the Budget; but no official of the Ministry of Finance could deny that the purchasing power of the Egyptian pound had sadly diminished, or could truthfully plead that the State was unable to meet this fresh, but legitimate, call upon her resources. During the pre-

<sup>1</sup> Only the lowest paid categories of service had received a war bonus to meet the increased cost of living. Nothing was done for other classes until the autumn of 1919, when an all-round addition of 20 per cent. was made to salaries, together with a generous temporary allowance.

<sup>2</sup> The point is illustrated by the steady rise in the prices of wheat and maize during the years of war:

Year.	<i>Average price of Wheat in ardebs</i>	<i>Average price of Maize in ardebs</i>
	<i>in February.</i>	<i>in February.</i>
1914	£E.1.420	£E.1.090
1915	1.580	0.940
1916	1.730	1.110
1917	2.950	1.670
1918	3.850	1.970
One ardeb of wheat = 150 kilogrammes.		
One ardeb of maize = 140 kilogrammes.		



ceding years there had been healthy differences between revenue and expenditure, and there was no reason to anticipate that the happy condition was about to alter.<sup>1</sup>

For many weeks Egypt had been without a Ministry, and the Nationalist party had foiled every attempt of the High Commissioner to form one. Shortly after the refusal of His Majesty's Government to receive Saad Zaghlul became known to the public, Hussein Pasha Rushdi, the Prime Minister, tendered his resignation. The news was received by Englishmen with sincere regret. No Egyptian had been more consistently friendly to Great Britain than Rushdi. He had sought no reward for his service, and demurred to no indignity. Supporting Great Britain's use of the resources of Egypt during the War, he had concurred also in her claim to take steps to protect her interests, even when they were opposed to Egyptian. He may have exaggerated his personal influence among his fellow countrymen, and have undertaken in consequence to perform more than was in his power. But such errors of judgement were insignificant in relation to his services, and England had reason to be grateful to Rushdi Pasha. Of the man himself, it is legitimate to say that he never failed to keep a promise once made, and that his spoken word counted as his written. In him Lord Kitchener reposed a confidence which he gave to few other Englishmen or Egyptians, and very honourably the Prime Minister repaid that trust. Egyptians had no less cause to regret the resignation. Time and again Rushdi had stood between them and alien authority. He had not hesitated on the outbreak of war to interpose in favour of individuals suspected, inaccurately in his judgement, of partiality

<sup>1</sup> On p. 323 the annual surpluses of state revenue over expenditure are given. That of the financial year ending on the 31st March 1919 amounted to more than £4,000,000.

towards the enemy, nor had he scrupled to employ every weapon at his command to secure from the Cotton Commission the most favourable prices. If Egypt at one period had thought that the Prime Minister had betrayed her interests, that suspicion was long since dead. The nation now was convinced on the contrary that he had been deluded by promises of compensation at the close of hostilities.<sup>1</sup>

But Rushdi Pasha was first and foremost an Egyptian, and as little inclined to accept the rebuttal which the British Government had administered to Saad Zaghlul as his fellow countrymen. He sought, therefore, for an excuse to range himself on the popular side, and in a memorandum addressed to the President of the Council by an Englishman holding high office in the Egyptian Government he found the opportunity. This document, harmless enough in itself, and intended probably only to provoke discussion, sketched a form of future government in Egypt which would secure the existing rights of foreigners and yet permit Egypt to control her own domestic affairs. There was little new in these ideas. Many of them had been advocated in Lord Cromer's Reports, and the suggestion represented only the writer's personal views. But the Prime Minister took the memorandum amiss, and seized upon it partly as an excuse to resign.

Amid the turmoil, the Civil Service during these painful days continued to transact the routine administration of the country, until a situation arose with which unaided they could not cope. The financial year was drawing to a close and the day approaching when the existing Budget became dead

<sup>1</sup> In defending, from a Nationalist point of view, the actions of Rushdi during these stormy years, Ahmed Pasha Zaki, formerly Secretary General of the Council of Ministers, contributed recently an article to the *Abram*, wherein he states that an undertaking of this nature was given to the Prime Minister.

by law. New provisions had been drawn up by the Ministry of Finance, but in the absence of a Council of Ministers there was no authority competent to sanction them. But unless some solution was found before the 1st April the State could pay no salaries and no bills. The High Commissioner was undismayed. Calling upon martial law, he authorized on the last day of March the publication of the new Budget, and required all persons to accept the provisions as if the latter had received the sanction prescribed in law. But he could not hope to settle all administrative difficulties by similar procedure, nor did he expect Egyptians to listen to academic rescripts issued by the Sultan.<sup>1</sup> The sore would not be healed, nor excitement stilled, by the issue of Royal or of Military proclamations. If Egypt was ever to recover confidence in a British sense of justice, a more substantial palliative must be found. The High Commissioner was not blind to that truth, and, careless whether his action was approved in Great Britain, he directed on the 7th April 1919 the release of Saad and his three companions from their confinement in Malta.

However surprised His Majesty's Government may have been at this act of clemency, most Englishmen in Egypt warmly welcomed it as a measure of true statesmanship. They were not convinced of the wisdom of British policy. Doubtful from the first whether the refusal of the Cabinet to receive an Egyptian deputation was expedient, the British community felt pretty sure that the arrest of Saad Zaghlul would not stop agitation in Egypt. Some in their criticism went even a step farther, questioning, now that war had ceased, the discretion of maintaining a Protectorate against the unanimous wish of Egyp-

<sup>1</sup> His Highness the Sultan published an appeal to the nation begging his subjects to resume their habitual calmness.

tians. It is desirable to avoid misconception on the point. There was in Egypt no Englishman who desired Great Britain to sever her association with that country, or who believed that that association in the past had not been beneficial to both. To maintain union, he was prepared to sacrifice, if needs be, a thousand formulas. If the word Protectorate conveyed a sense of servitude to Egyptians, let the term be abandoned and a less distasteful title substituted. Nothing mattered to these Imperialists, provided the tie existing between the land of their birth and the country of their adoption remained unbroken. Thus, on the main issue, no difference of opinion separated the home government from the local British community ; it was only in the choice of means to accomplish the aim that the two parted company. By both, Egypt was likened to a refractory child. But while the second would have tried conciliation as the treatment most likely to produce permanent goodwill towards Great Britain, the first, obsessed with false beliefs, pronounced for repression. His Majesty's Government pursued their chosen path, and England has lost Egypt.

The release from Malta of the exiled Pashas threw the nation into transports of delight. Great Britain was acclaimed Egypt's benefactor, and the people gave themselves up to rejoicings. But the manifestations were short-lived. The old bitterness returned with added force when it became plain that England had no intention of removing the Protectorate. It is conceivable that the country would have settled down, had the High Commissioner been empowered to announce now that his own Government would receive the accredited representatives of Egypt. Influential sections of society were frankly alarmed at the universal confusion of the country, and in the hope of restoring order would have welcomed that intima-

tion as a satisfactory instalment of their hopes. But England would not unbend, save to promise an inquiry into the causes of the discontent, an offer which left Egypt unmoved.

Yet the High Commissioner's clemency produced one satisfactory result: Rushdi Pasha, two days later, formed a new Cabinet, stipulating only that he be permitted to represent Egypt in London. While awaiting a reply, the Prime Minister endeavoured to restore discipline in the Civil Service. Unfortunately his appeal to its members coincided with the birth of a rumour that the Congress sitting at Versailles was investigating the grievances of Egypt. The excitement caused by the report was accentuated when forged cables, asserting that Europe had called upon England to evacuate Egypt within three months, were circulated widely, and accepted as exact. It was difficult to undeceive the Egyptian. Vain and credulous, he lent a willing ear to the improbable tale, believing honestly that the Congress would set aside all other business in order to attend to his complaint. More fiercely than ever were the Civil Service urged to stand fast, and besought to remember that any weakening on their part at this juncture would be interpreted in France to the disadvantage of their country. Rushdi Pasha could not overcome the effect of this propaganda. The Civil Service declined to return to work and reluctantly the High Commissioner intervened. Under a proclamation dated the 20th April 1919, he required, under pain of dismissal from the Civil Service, all officials to resume their duties.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The proclamation in question associated the Egyptian Government with the Protectorate. The second paragraph of the Preamble made that point clear:

'Whereas a number of officials and employees have recently deserted their posts, and it has been made clear that they have taken this action with the object of dictating a course of policy to the Government of

Rushdi Pasha remained in office just long enough to learn that his projected visit to London was thought inopportune, and then resigned. Again Egypt was without Ministers. But the High Commissioner had snatched a little breathing space, and had had time to lay his plans. Averse to governing by military proclamation, he empowered each Under-Secretary of State to exercise the authority of a Minister. Upon that order no adverse comment can be made. Egypt herself had brought about the indignity. But the expediency of other acts of interference in the civil administration is less apparent. The High Commissioner filled a number of vacant posts in the Civil Service by the appointment of Englishmen. While it is true that the majority of these offices had been reserved always for officials of British nationality, it is questionable whether this particular moment was suitable for the High Commissioner to exercise patronage. The step lent unnecessary colour to the assertion of the Nationalist party that England had seized all avenues of government in Egypt.

But the firm attitude displayed by the High Commissioner was reaping the reward which was its due. At the end of May Egypt had recovered tranquillity. Mobile columns, over-running the country from Alexandria to Aswan, had restored order; Military Courts were sitting in judgement upon individual Egyptians accused of complicity in murder and outrage, and the administration of the country was proceeding upon normal lines. A new Prime Minister, Mohammed Pasha Said, had been found, and the Civil Service were back at work. The wealthy landed classes took no further part in a programme intended to embarrass England in Egypt, and in common with the fellahin were preoccupied in wondering how far

His Highness the Sultan, and of repudiating the Protectorate, which His Majesty's Government has established over Egypt.'

military authority would hold them to account for the excesses committed during the months of March and April. In short, there was no longer in the country open defiance of authority, and the moment had come to dispatch to Egypt the promised Commission of Inquiry. But public business detained the members at home, and the Commission did not commence their investigation until the succeeding winter. It was then too late to save Egypt to the Empire.

Thus closed the first stage of a political campaign which, from the winter of 1918-19, Egypt waged unceasingly against the British Occupation. The leaders of the movement could have drawn little encouragement from the result of the opening phase. England had triumphed all along the line, riveting more firmly than ever her fetters about the necks of Egyptians. To all appearance, Egypt had lost temporarily the prospect of exercising the few pretensions to constitutional government and to political freedom which she possessed at the outbreak of war. It was highly improbable either that the Legislative Assembly, adjourned since the 1st November 1914, would be allowed to meet in the course of the coming winter, or that Ministers would assume their former control over the administration of the country. Martial law would continue to over-ride civil law, and Egyptians be forbidden to express their opinion in public.

Dispassionate observers had expected no other ending to the adventure. To suppose that Egypt could intimidate Great Britain was pure madness; and, as if anxious to prove her insanity, she had launched the campaign at the most unpropitious moment. The Canal zone was flooded with British and Indian troops out of Syria and Palestine, awaiting passage home to demobilize, and at no previous moment in the course of the War had the Army so

ample a force to maintain order in Egypt. Equally absurd were the hopes entertained by Egyptians that the Congress of Versailles would intervene on their behalf. That body gave no sign of sympathy with Egypt, much less of inclination to quarrel with England over the Protectorate. Allied statesmen were too absorbed in completing in the council chamber the destruction of Germany to listen to complaint from insignificant nations.

But the clamour of Egyptians in March 1919 had been misinterpreted. Originally no more than a spontaneous desire to register protest against prevailing conditions, the movement was confused with revolution, and handled in accordance with that incorrect impression. The Army, placed in supreme control, believed that Egyptians desired to overthrow authority, and treated the people as avowed enemies of Great Britain. It was a lamentable misconception of the facts. Egypt at no time desired to injure England, and at first claimed no more than the right to control her own domestic business. Mistaking the sentiment, Great Britain pursued a policy of repression, which caused Egypt to stiffen her demand. The marked absence of combination between the various elements of society suggests sufficiently that direct action was neither contemplated nor planned at the beginning. Had it been otherwise, the provinces would have begun their work of destruction simultaneously with the outbreak of disorder in Cairo, and employees of the State would not have awaited the conclusion of the rioting to start their own campaign against authority. Great pains, no doubt, had been taken by Saad Zaghlul and his agents to bring home to each section of the community the burden of their individual grievances, and to excite the belief that in an Egypt freed from British control a happier state of affairs would reign. But revolution is not made



by rhetoric alone, and, unless organization follows, talk leads only to talk. Of such organization, or of co-operation, there was no visible trace, and protest developed into action by accident and not by design. The fire had been duly laid, and the arrest of Zaghlul was, as it were, the match which lighted it.

If Great Britain was slow to confess her blindness, Egypt was equally unmindful of the substantial blessings which the former had bestowed upon her. In the torrent of denunciation hurled by the Nationalist party on England's head, there was no confession that the Occupation in any respect had benefited Egypt. From the omission, posterity will judge the honesty of the spokesmen of the nation and the bitterness of the people towards Great Britain. Yet, without venturing to anticipate the verdict of future generations, it may be said that England had given to Egypt upright in place of corrupt government, solvency in place of bankruptcy, and liberty in place of oppression. During the period of reconstruction, errors of judgment, no doubt, were committed. Education might have progressed more quickly, and Englishmen have relinquished to Egyptians a more substantial share in the responsible government of the country.

But administrators of a backward country move slowly in the direction of reform, halting out of prudence at every stage, lest the country is unable to digest the unaccustomed food. Thus, what seems mistaken policy in these conditions frequently is no more than excessive caution. The War did not alter the spirit of the policy of the Occupation, but Great Britain kept watch and ward over the frontiers of Egypt, and, in the maintenance of large armies, put vast sums of money into the pockets of Egyptians. Confessedly, during that period England committed indiscretions. She was unable to fulfil rash promises, and unwittingly wounded Egyptian feeling. But

these wrongs and injuries were transient phases of a state of war, and, if Egypt smarted from them, she enjoyed substantial compensation in return. Many another country in the winter of 1918-19 must have envied her situation. Egypt had added nothing to her public debt, nor increased her taxation. She had few dead to mourn, and no unemployed to feed. All this good fortune she owed exclusively to her association with England.<sup>1</sup>

Yet that fact alone would scarcely have justified Great Britain's unqualified refusal to listen to the appeal of Egypt, had not other reasoning perhaps come to its support. Rightly, every Englishman wished first to be sure that Egypt was capable of managing her own domestic business, and next that the whole nation desired sincerely to be ruled by their fellow countrymen. Hesitation would be intelligible enough. The dead consuls of the past, Cromer, Gorst, and Kitchener, had neither encouraged Egypt to practise the science of administration nor believed in the capacity of her people to govern, and Englishmen who recalled the suffering of fellahin in the past at the hands of more powerful neighbours questioned whether humble cultivators at heart desired the withdrawal of British control. Thus both authority and precedent counselled delay. But Egypt in 1919 was not the Egypt which Cromer or Kitchener knew. Insensibly, the War had altered many of her former beliefs, and she was no longer afraid of England. That Power had been so nearly worsted in the struggle, and

<sup>1</sup> If any doubt is felt as to the increase of prosperity, the values of Imports and Exports should be sufficient to dispel it.

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Imports.</i>	<i>Exports.</i>
1914	20,800,000	24,000,000
1915	18,500,000	27,000,000
1916	30,000,000	37,000,000
1917	30,000,000	41,000,000
1918	48,000,000	45,000,000

had committed so many obvious errors of judgement, that Egyptians lost faith in her might and prescience, and now arrogantly claimed equality in sovereignty. As this feeling deepened, it begot in each class of the community a sense of their own rights. The later cry of the fellahin for independence had more than a political significance. It was symbolical of their intention to submit to no man's domination.

Since this book professes to speak only of the influence of the War upon Egypt, it cannot discuss the succeeding embarrassments of the Protectorate. Their origin, the careless and the premature abandonment by Great Britain of her administrative control, and the ultimate triumph of Egyptians,<sup>1</sup> are subjects which belong more properly to another volume. But of them this may be said here. No student of later Anglo-Egyptian relations can understand the progress of Egypt to independence, unless he possesses some acquaintance with the history of the country during the years of war. To provide that knowledge this book has been written.

<sup>1</sup> 'Declaration to Egypt.

Whereas His Majesty's Government in accordance with their declared intentions desired forthwith to recognize Egypt as an independent sovereign state, and

Whereas the relations between His Majesty's Government and Egypt are of vital interest to the British Empire

The following principles are hereby declared :

1. The British Protectorate over Egypt is terminated and Egypt is declared to be an independent sovereign state.

2. So soon as the Government of His Highness shall pass an Act of Indemnity with application to all inhabitants of Egypt, Martial Law, as proclaimed on November 2nd, 1914, shall be withdrawn.

Dated Cairo, 28th February 1922.'

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